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ABSTRACT

This monograph presents the findings of a research project that sought to analyze the relationship between teachers' work experiences over the course of their careers within specific institutional structures and their perceptions of the meanings of these work experiences to their self-esteem, sense of job satisfaction, and sense of efficacy. The choice of subjects was limited to women elementary school teachers because the working conditions and role expectations of elementary school teachers differ significantly from teachers of secondary students. Two interview groups were selected according to length of teaching career: half taught under 15 years, half over 15 years. The teachers in the over-15-years-of-service group represented that group of teachers with which the stereotypes of female elementary school teachers are most associated. The frequently negative nature of these stereotypes represents the kind of teacher with whom younger teachers are most afraid of being identified. This perception on the part of the younger teachers is a key element in their feelings toward the profession. Comparing the responses of the two groups of subjects illuminates how age and length of service are reflected in teachers' experiences and perceptions. The focus of the study was on 25 subjects. Interviews were conducted using the Interview Guide, which identified areas of concern to be explored. A narrative discussion on the project includes direct quotations from the subjects on their feelings and perceptions. (JD)

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In November 1972, educators from several parts of the United States met at the University of North Dakota to discuss some common concerns about the narrow accountability ethos that had begun to dominate schools and to share what many believed to be more sensible means of both documenting and assessing children's learning. Subsequent meetings, much sharing of evaluation information, and financial and moral support from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund have all contributed to keeping together what is now called the North Dakota Study Group on Evaluation. A major goal of the Study Group, beyond support for individual participants and programs, is to provide materials for teachers, parents, school administrators and governmental decision-makers (within State Education Agencies and the U.S. Office of Education) that might encourage re-examination of a range of evaluation issues and perspectives about schools and schooling.

Towards this end, the Study Group has initiated a continuing series of monographs, of which this paper is one. Over time, the series will include material on, among other things, children's thinking, children's language, teacher support systems, inservice training, the school's relationship to the larger community. The intent is that these papers be taken not as final statements--a new ideology, but as working papers, written by people who are acting on, not just thinking about, these problems, whose implications need an active and considered response.

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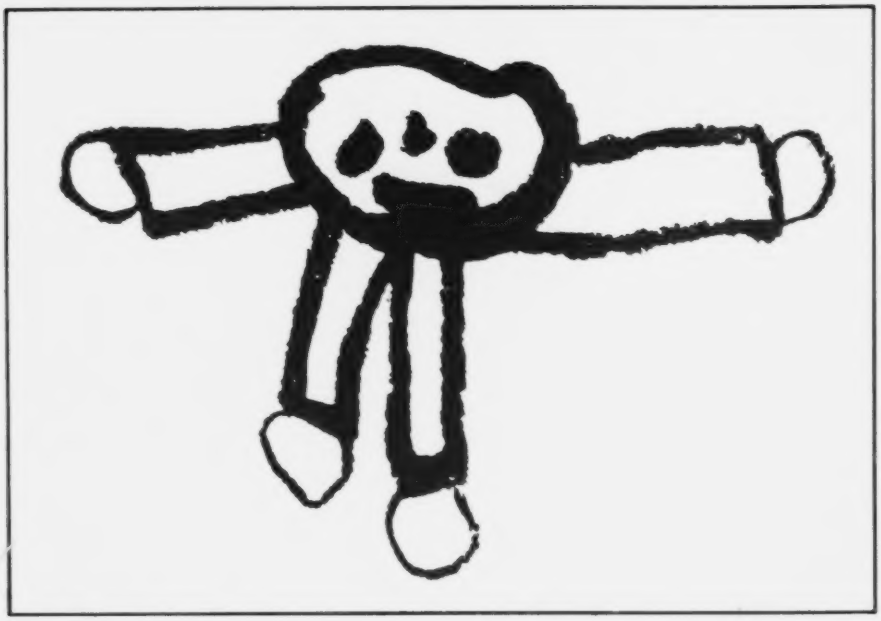

The Boston Women's Teachers' Group
Sara Freedman Jane Jackson Katherine Boles

THE EFFECT OF TEACHING ON TEACHERS

Center for Teaching and Learning
University of North Dakota
February 1986

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Introduction

The research project, "The Effects of the Institutional Structure of Schools on Teachers," investigates the effects of teaching on teachers, specifically women elementary school teachers. It was conducted in three stages. The first two stages, spanning the school years 1979-1980 and 1980-1981, were spent in data collection and preliminary data analysis. One hundred seventy-eight hour-long interviews with women elementary school teachers were conducted on a bi-weekly basis during the two years of data collection. Thirty-seven hour-long bi-monthly interviews were completed in the second year, and five two-hour interviews were added to gain in-depth knowledge about specific teaching situations. Altogether, 219 hours of interviewing time were logged representing the views of 30 teachers. The third stage was devoted to data analysis and writing up the results of the project.

The research project, "The Effects of the Institutional Structure of Schools on Teachers," began with one central question -- "How do the structure of the elementary school and the experience of teaching within it affect the teacher over time?" The question was raised by a group of women teachers working within a variety of such institutions. In order to understand why we wanted to answer that particular question, and how we attempted to answer it, it is necessary to trace the initial impetus for the project as a whole:

When I was a kid in the 50's, I went to a strict, traditional school. The teachers were thirty- and forty-year veterans. They never varied from plans written many years ago. In September the same pictures were posted on the blackboard. The construction paper borders were replaced each year, but the paper faded early in November and was a dull sheen by March. I loved those teachers. They conformed to many of the stereotypes of long-time women schoolmarms -- stern, swift in justice, unimaginative, inflexible, sure of their methods. They praised the docile, hard-working, quick-to-grasp pupil and were alternately punishing or neglectful of the silent majority. The wicked were quickly subdued.

In fifth grade a spate of male teachers arrived, returning GI's straight out of college who had a fertile field in the burgeoning school industry. They were different -- young, creative, with lots of energy. They introduced Science, giant papier-mâché animals, and new seating patterns. We all wanted to be in their classrooms. Most of them soon moved to other positions in the quickly expanding system -- principal, science coordinator, head of the creative arts department. The children were left with the old women teachers -- and with a disdain of old women teachers.

When I began teaching 10 years ago, I had a clear image of the kind of teacher I wanted to be -- Mr. Williams, the fifth-grade teacher who had introduced the most daring educational experiments, worked tirelessly (coming to school on Saturday). He was the closest person I actually knew to the figures portrayed by Jonathan Kozol, Herb Kohl, and John Holt in those books coming out in the 60's. And I managed. I worked

*tirelessly, tried all kinds of experiments, came in on Saturdays. It was exhilarating -- for the first few years. But as the years wore on and on, I began to notice that the drive was being replaced by myriad frustrations. Many teachers who had arrived with me on the crest of the 60's waves, felt tethered in place. We became less experimental, angrier, found it harder to give, more isolated. In my voice and face and walk I was watching a metamorphosis. I was turning into my present perception of one of them -- those female teachers of long ago who worked year after year in a closed space, each class merging into the next, stale ideas, frayed construction paper.**

*Sara Freedman, excerpt from personal journal, January 1979.

That beginning statement, written in January 1979, crystallized for our group both a recognition of the changing nature of our attitudes toward our careers and a commitment to understand those changes. At that time, we had been functioning as a teacher support group for three years, meeting on a weekly basis. Initially, we came together with two purposes -- to give each other support in the daily crises and aggravations of teaching, and to discuss teaching from a political perspective, trying to see our work against the larger fabric of economics, history, and schools as institutions of society. Throughout our meetings we were struck with how the two facets of our discussions played off each other: reading a theoretical article about schools and political economy or about women as workers illuminated experiences in our own teaching lives; and in sharing our personal concerns we repeatedly referred back to reading and more general discussions we had had. In this way we began to see ourselves not as isolated individuals in single classrooms, but as part of a group whose similarities were more pronounced than their differences.

We had become convinced through our years of sharing that the experiences we had assumed to be unique to each of us were often not ours alone. Yet each of us in her daily work continued to feel, to a greater or lesser extent, isolated. We knew that the topics we were discussing were important, at least to us. We also knew that our group was homogeneous in age, race, socioeconomic status, and general teaching philosophy. We were not at all sure that our reactions and experiences would parallel other teachers' perceptions whose personal histories were very different from our own.

It became clearer that without an understanding of how teaching had affected many teachers, as well as ourselves, we would be caught in an ever more isolating position. We could find no tools, no framework from educational literature, that would analyze how schools worked and how they had prevented us from reaching out

to teachers who taught down the hall or behind the folding partition door. We began to recognize that part of the problem for our continued isolation rested in the model we were using for investigating and improving our own school experiences as teachers. This model, based on a number of influential books written in the late sixties, emphasized the individual contribution by caring teachers whose dedication could significantly alter and improve schools. These books had inspired us as we entered teaching and provided a standard by which we had been judging ourselves and our fellow-teachers. Nothing in these books mentioned the powerful influence of the structure of schools on the relationship between the teacher and the child, principal, parent, or specialist.

Several years later, the publication of many articles on teacher burnout reinforced this essentially individualistic point of view. Thus, the teacher literature that we read -- the books that had influenced our decisions to enter the profession, and the articles suggesting that we leave -- refrained from investigating the areas we had felt to be most painful in our teaching -- our growing sense of isolation and alienation from all with whom we came into daily contact: our students, their parents, our fellow teachers, and administrators.

The publication of the articles on teacher burnout coincided with our realization that the teacher support group more frequently clarified our frustrations than it provided resources for alleviating them. We would speak, often with cynicism or bewilderment, of the teacher at the other end of the corridor; but talking to her, learning the background for her actions and beliefs, had been considered fruitless. Those books of the sixties had implied that we must maintain our distance from them if we wished to continue our *inspired work*. The teacher's position within the school system as a whole was not seen as a *professional* concern. We were ill-prepared to handle the conflicts that arose from the nature of that institutional structure.

We increasingly recognized that no matter how supportive our teacher group was for us -- all teaching in different school systems -- the problems and their solutions were rooted in the working relationships in the school buildings and school systems within which we taught. In order to understand how teaching was affecting us and why, we had to know how and why it had affected others.

We therefore developed a research project that sought to analyze the relationship between teachers' work experiences over the course of their careers within specific institutional structures and their perceptions of the meanings of these work experiences to their self-esteem, sense of job satisfaction, and sense

This monograph is an edited version of a report to the National Institute of Education.

of efficacy. We know we have secured moving and important testimony on teaching.

We have been able to elicit structural causes to teachers' dilemmas without trivializing personal achievements and frustrations. We also know we have an overwhelming mass of data whose contours and rough outlines are not easily discernible, nor are they verifiable by quantitative analysis. Interviews are not made for neat, clinical packages, and the insights are often buried amongst mounds of details spread out over weeks of discussion.

We restricted our choice of subjects to women elementary school teachers because the working conditions and role expectations of elementary teachers differ significantly from teachers of secondary students. We restricted our subjects to women because of the overwhelming representation of women within the occupation of elementary school teacher (87%),* and the equally skewed percentage of men in administrative positions in elementary schools (83%).*

*National Education Association, *Estimates of School Statistics* (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1978).

Two interview groups were selected according to length of teaching career: half have taught under 15 years, half over 15 years. We chose to equalize these two groups in terms of the number of our subjects despite the fact that teachers in the under-15-years range of experience are statistically greater in number (52.2% of all teachers)* than those who have taught over 15 years (30%).* The teachers in the over-15-years-of-service group represent that group of teachers with which the stereotypes of female elementary school teacher are most associated. The frequently negative nature of these stereotypes presents the kind of teacher with whom younger teachers are most afraid of being identified. This perception on the part of younger teachers represents a key element in their feelings toward the profession. In-depth interviewing of these older teachers ascertained to what extent they felt they have conformed to those stereotypes and what are the institutional influences for that conformity. Comparing the responses of the two groups of subjects illuminated how age and length of service within specific historical periods are reflected in teachers' experiences and perceptions.

We focused on 25 subjects who substantially matched the national teacher population in terms of socioeconomic and racial background, marital status, educational attainment of parents, and father's occupation within the limitations imposed by such a small sample. Their teaching situations also encompassed a variety of institutional configurations, from large urban inner-city systems to very small, affluent systems.

Though hesitant at first to ask for a commitment of 15 hours of time, for which no payment, official

recognition, of course credit could be offered, we soon discovered that we were offering something many teachers were anxious to take advantage of -- a chance to talk seriously and on a regular basis about their work.*

*This positive response both pleased us in connection with our own research, and dismayed us when we considered its implications for the working lives of our subjects.

The tool used in conducting our interviews was the Interview Guide, developed from issues that emerged out of several months' reading and discussion. At the beginning of the project we identified the following areas of concern that would be explored with our subjects:

- How teachers are hired and evaluated, whose opinion of a teacher is most influential in hiring and in evaluations, what aspects of the job are taken into consideration in evaluations.

- How much control a teacher has over what is taught and how; what kinds of behavior are encouraged and allowed in classrooms; to whom is the teacher answerable and in what ways.

- How much leeway is allowed in choice of materials: what books a teacher uses, who controls the purchase of books and supplies, how much of the budget can be used by the teacher for discretionary funds and/or teacher-made materials.

- How the teacher's daily schedule is determined: by her own plan, by a school-wide agreement, by a bell system, by specialists' schedules.

- How much autonomy a teacher has over decisions about grades and retention.

- The lines of responsibility and allegiance for a teacher: do they encompass only the self-contained classroom or do they include other teachers, students, and the school itself?

- The kinds of services available as resources and support when dealing with the needs of students or parents.

- The amount of conflict that is allowed to surface among teachers or between teachers and administrators; how this conflict is resolved.

- Whose opinion -- teachers, administrators, specialists, parents, students -- is valued and listened to on questions of classroom size, class composition, appropriate student behavior and ability groupings.

- What policies encourage teachers to help and reinforce each other, to cooperate rather than to compete.

- The formalized ways of communicating with parents -- report cards, conferences -- and whether informal, spontaneous communications are encouraged or discouraged.

- What channels are established for approval of requests, and what kinds of requests necessitate approval.

- Who determines a teacher's access to the school building itself (after school, weekends, school vacations).

- How standardized tests are used; the importance they are accorded; their effects on teachers, children, and parents.

- How much money is allocated for staff development, the types and range of courses reimbursed by the school system to the individual teacher, the amount of input solicited for teachers in the determination of in-service courses.

- The information provided to teachers and the encouragement and support offered them in the pursuit of grants, seeking funds for programs of their own design.

The Interview Guide was developed from these variables. The *nuts and bolts* of classroom and school life were listed. For example, the variable of:

> how teachers are hired and evaluated, whose opinion of a teacher is more influential in hiring and in evaluations, what aspects of the job are taken into consideration in evaluations

was expanded in the Interview Guide to include the following categories:

under the section of the Guide titled "Relationships among School Population" --

- Principals' expectations of teachers
- Competition among teachers
- Relationships with specialists

under the section of the Guide titled "Classroom Issues" --

- Rationales for nonachievement of children
- Teaching style

under the section titled "Work Conditions" --

- Security and steadiness of employment
- Tenure and job security
- Teacher evaluations.

We recognized that teachers often answered in ways that seemed to evade questions, misinterpret them, or bring in extraneous information from their personal lives. As the interviewing process and data analysis progressed, we sometimes uncovered frailities or beliefs that seemed to mar our initial enthusiasm or special warmth for that interviewee. Many times we were forced by the subject's own words or deeds to make connections we did not wish to make. In time, it was just those unexpected connections and extraneous details that proved the most illuminating for understanding the world of the teacher. A statement made in October would be radically altered by June. A teacher would describe another teacher's follies in terms she had unwittingly used to explicate her own position.

Perhaps the experience of being intensively probed about any subject would automatically cause a shift in emphasis and a new awareness that would not have occurred under *normal conditions*. However, it was not generally the teachers themselves that recognized such conflicting opinions. They were not privy to their own words.

We were bothered, annoyed, sometimes ashamed of these glaring inconsistencies. It was upsetting to hear a teacher say one month:

We were all so very conscious of teaching subject matter that we were not teaching the children. We were just teaching the subject. I had made the determination, "I'm not going to teach like that." I almost don't care if a kid doesn't know to add if he knows how to be nice to another human being and if he respects himself. I think that's very important. (W, 1980)

only to state equally adamantly in a later interview:

I think the happiest day of my life was when I got back the reading tests and found out that the exact percentage of kids in the other two first grades were all reading on the same level. They had 25% of the kids who were below grade level and so did I. (W, 1981)

Letters are used to indicate specific teachers interviewed by the Boston Women's Teachers' Group. Single letters indicate teachers interviewed bi-weekly over a year's teaching schedule. Double letters indicate teachers interviewed bi-monthly over a school year calendar.

Reading and rereading through each woman's experience we sought to find within her testimony as well as the data as a whole a series of connections, an internal logic, that would clarify the teachers' thoughts so that neither they nor we would be embarrassed by their incongruities.

These inconsistencies seemed to confirm academic researchers' veiled disdain of teachers. Philip Jackson, in his book *Life in Classrooms*, offers this perspective:

*If teachers sought a more thorough understanding of their world, insisted on greater rationality in their actions, were completely open-minded in their consideration of pedagogical choices, and profound in their view of the human condition, they might well receive greater applause from intellectuals, but it is doubtful that they would perform with greater efficiency in the classroom. On the contrary, it is quite possible that such paragons of virtue, if they could be found to exist, would actually have a deuce of a time coping in any sustained way with a class of third graders in a playyard full of nursery tots.**

*Philip Jackson, *Life in Classrooms* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969).

From this perspective Jackson justifies the division of labor which allocates to the academic the organizational analysis and to the teacher the responsibility for carrying out the implications of the policy makers' philosophies. We were not at ease with this division of labor. Often when we wrestled with ill-fitting pieces of information and beliefs, we came to acknowledge within ourselves a similar unfolding of opposites. We began to requestion why and how we had entered teaching. We remembered incidents in our own early teaching careers we had somehow forgotten to tell each other in over five years together as a teacher support group.

We began to understand that the project itself was a means of talking about ourselves, our commitment to teaching and our fear of stereotypes through the words of others, our subjects, thus easing the pain of identifying our own needs. Although the project was propelled by a strong personal commitment to ourselves as teachers and our need to understand the pain and joy of that experience, the act of research itself easily creates a view of the people as *subjects* -- others. It was only when we were willing to identify with the teachers again, admitting our similarities and the reasons for our differences that we no longer pushed for logic within each person's testimony.

We returned to our transcripts, listening to the person's words, trying to hear them as she herself intended them to be heard. Now we were able to accept the ability of these teachers to hold opposing views

and noted these clashes were especially strong when they spoke about the nature of teaching -- what they wanted to do and were asked to do and what their work conditions permitted them to do.

For example, we noted a tension surrounding that common definition of *schoolteacher*. The tension is especially strong when teachers speak about their personal feelings of self-efficacy. Here following specific topics through a series of concentric circles -- the classroom, the school and the school system -- revealed that teachers can feel a general sense of efficacy in their classrooms, amply documented by anecdote and test score verification, that was lacking or allowed to go unnoticed in the areas beyond the classroom. In fact, for some teachers the more grounded and sure they are in classroom issues, the less they are assumed to contribute to or be valued by life outside the classroom:

I think by the nature of a teacher's work, you are confined to a room with little children. You aren't being fed information from sources that are as bright or brighter than you are. And so you begin to close into a little world. At the end of the day I'm saying, "Two plus two equals four." That has been my hangup all day. Does that make you any less of a bright person because your job focuses in on young children? (D, 1979)

Teaching is such a compartmentalized kind of thing in a traditional school. I don't know about teaching in an open school, but in a traditional school you are in your room and you close the door to your room and you sort of don't mingle with the rest of the school community at all. There are some things about it, if things aren't going too well, you feel terribly alone. Terribly responsible for every single thing that goes on. It's true that we deal with the children but there is fairly limited contact professionally with your peers and, of course, it's true for the children, too. We're pretty much confined in there, we go to other classes, we go to the music room, we go to the cafeteria, we go to recess but the contact is pretty limited. When you read newspaper articles about education, you feel like a ghost really. You feel like you're not really there. That people aren't seeing you. (Y, 1981)

In this school all you are is a classroom teacher and nobody wants to know what you are other than for what you do in your room. The supervisors want to know that when they go into your classroom your kids are in their chairs doing what they're supposed to be doing. They don't want to know anything else. It is particularly difficult to accept this year because last summer I

just got involved in a lot of different kinds of things that kind of opened up my horizons and made me see myself in a little bit different light. Not "just a classroom teacher." Coming back to the classroom was a little bit of a letdown. All of a sudden I looked at my seven bulletin boards and got out my teachers' manual and I thought, "Oh, shit, we're back to this again." (W, 1981)

1

Inherent Conflicts in Public Education

As we investigated the opposing views held by teachers, we came to see that the rhetoric surrounding the institution of public education often proves to be in direct conflict with the function a teacher finds herself required to perform:

- Teachers work in an institution which supposedly prepares its clients for adulthood, but which views those entrusted with this task, the teachers themselves, as incapable of mature judgment.
- Teachers work in an institution which holds, in its rhetoric, that questioning and debating, risk and error develop one's thinking ability. But learning situations are structured to lead to one right answer, and both teachers and students are evaluated in ways that emphasize only quantifiable results.
- Teachers work in an institution that has the social responsibility of developing the whole child. But the structure of the institution constricts the types of behavior acceptable in teachers and pupils.
- Teachers work in an institution that is charged with the social task of providing equal opportunity for the school-age population of a pluralistic, multilevel society. But the structure of schools emphasizes comparative worth and increases competition not only among the pupils but also among parents, teachers, and administrators.
- Teachers work in an institution that is charged with *upholding democracy* by developing an electorate capable of *critical thinking* and the intelligent balancing of alternatives but teachers are required to pursue this goal by increasingly mechanical, technical means.

TEACHERS WORK IN AN INSTITUTION WHICH SUPPOSEDLY PREPARES ITS CLIENTS FOR ADULTHOOD, BUT WHICH VIEWS THE TEACHERS THEMSELVES AS INCAPABLE OF MATURE JUDGMENT.

When our principal is talking to a first, or second, or third grade teacher, . . . I find that she's repeating directions one, two, or three times, almost as you would to a first-, second-, or third-grader. When you get higher up, fourth, fifth, and sixth, the directions are not repeated as much, but they're more done in like

an outline form as you would give to kids who are a little bit older. (AA, 1980)

After working for months on the fourth grade reading curriculum, we brought it up to the Assistant Superintendent. We had put a blanket statement at the beginning stating that we would assume that the teachers would be responsible by consulting the textbooks and other resource materials and their expertise and so and so forth . . . He made it quite clear that he didn't think they were capable of going over anything by themselves, finding the materials, using them appropriately . . . We're smart enough to do all the busy work but not smart enough to carry it out. I think this curriculum required a great deal of work that he didn't want to do and he gave it to the teachers. It's a kind of power thing. He can still get the gathered material and go before the school committee . . . All the teachers did all the work . . . I really haven't seen any published words of praise for teachers. (D, 1980)

Every Tuesday is a half day for faculty meeting. The boss does all the talking. They are just sit-and-listen types of things . . . If he asks for suggestions on things, it usually is put like this, "Now this is what I have planned. If there's anybody who wishes to disagree or there's anybody who doesn't care to go along with that . . ." That might not be his exact words, but he really doesn't care to open anything to discussion. People sit there deadpan because they don't want to commit themselves, you know, get themselves into any kind of hot water, a little afraid sometimes, depends on who the principal is. (E, 1979)

But as far as most of the stuff we discuss at faculty meetings, it's all administrative stuff or stuff that comes down from the central office that is really somewhat apart from the actual core of teaching, you know. (M, 1981)

We don't have a lot of faculty meetings. When she [the principal] has faculty meetings she needs to give us information. They don't last very long. She gives us the information and that's that . . . At the school where I was last year, the principal there would have us attend these lengthy meetings where he would expound and he would ask for our input and then he'd make the decision and completely ignore any input that we might have given him. So we really felt like he was wasting our time in making us attend these meetings when he was making all the decisions anyway. (HH, 1981)

The faculty meetings are run, in my particular build-

ing, by the principal of the building, and that is his forum. It's his chance to talk about what's going on with him and what he wants to see happen in the building and his directives and the kinds of things that are essential for the running of the building for him. There is very little time left for anything else. (W, 1981)

Our faculty meetings are very pedantic from an administrator's point of view. Not very much go-between. Not a whole lot of soul-searching. Just let's get to the point and get out of here. (NN, 1981)

The principal has a cute little thing just to keep people in line. He sends around faculty notices all the time. One notice will be #39-80. This is year '80 and this is the 39th notice that he's sent around this year. Every once in a while will come around a message that says, "Refer to office notation 40-80, Item 6. Be ready to give me your comments on it tomorrow morning." Then, good God, where is notice 40? It better not be thrown out or hopefully somebody saved it. You can take your chances that he won't follow up on it. Probably more often than not he won't. But, good God, you stand there with egg in your face if he does. So you may as well keep the stupid notices. (R, 1980)

We don't have very many faculty meetings, about five a year. We get a bulletin every week that usually says everything you need to know. At faculty meetings I often find myself taking a position and speaking up where other people don't. They don't because they're smarter. They know it does no good. (CC, 1981)

That's the thing that really kind of aggravates me about education: we as educators are not treated as adults. I feel that administrators still look upon us as being one of the children. So you teach elementary education, so you have an elementary education mind, and we can tell you just about anything and you will believe us. And at this point I would like to get into a situation where . . . I would be respected for my thinking as a person, as an individual, and I find that in this particular field, I'm not always treated that way, and I resent it and I'm angered by it, too. (AA, 1980)

They check up on you like you're children. They always treat you like they're the teacher and you're the child . . . They have to check your planbook. Matter of fact, we have a stamp, his initials are stamped on it. I've even known principals that have given stars to be funny . . . They would walk into your room and you have to be within minutes of where your program

card says. We have to write a program card where we are going to be at a certain time. (D, 1980)

Too frequently, however, the teacher is told to encourage independent thought and action in her pupils, while at the same time being cautioned never to leave her charges unattended. The same lack of trust implied here is mirrored in the school's careful monitoring and control over the teacher within her classroom.

We have been told that we were never to leave our classrooms. We are never to leave those children for one moment *unless we open our doors, go across the hall, and tell another teacher that we had left. And if something, God forbid, happened, it is* our fault. *That is insane. Children should be able to be left alone. By the time they are 12 and they cannot be left alone it is a tremendous failure of the educational institution. It sets up this dynamic between you and them that you can't trust them, you can't allow them to grow up because you're not allowed to grow. (G, 1981)*

The intercom is something that many people have been paranoid about. There is a button on this that can be pushed to Privacy, which means the office can talk to you, but they can't hear *you unless you press it onto Open . . . It has been rumored . . . I believe the rumor . . . that the principal can in fact override that and listen to anyone he chooses. And that's something that has upset people at different times. Yeah, I mean if you're a teacher who's having problems, that is definitely something that you're very aware of . . . (C, 1980)*

EDUCATION IS AN INSTITUTION WHICH HOLDS THAT QUESTIONING AND DEBATING, RISK AND ERROR DEVELOP ONE'S THINKING ABILITY. BUT LEARNING SITUATIONS ARE STRUCTURED TO LEAD TO ONE RIGHT ANSWER, AND BOTH TEACHERS AND STUDENTS ARE EVALUATED IN WAYS THAT EMPHASIZE ONLY QUANTIFIABLE RESULTS.

The principal was a marvelous person for handling the paper work, organizing the building, but when it came right down to the individual child, I think sometimes he missed the point a little. Once I remember he came into the classroom and said, "Look at that, and that, and that." He was pointing to the reading scores of three children. And these children were so, so unbelievably slow. I thought they were doing beautifully. They really sustained their interest to the end of the year and slow children don't do *that. And I was enthusiastic. I was pushing a new program in reading for all it was worth. I can remember feeling awful, just awful when he said that. I felt I had been put down, a*

terrible put-down. I used to work like a son of a gun, always that push to do your best. And I felt awful. I don't think I dwelt on it forever, but I can remember getting feelings of like what a thankless job, you know. Really. (E, 1980)

The worst thing about the ICRT is that you get this printout and you're expected to find the profile of each individual child and then find material on those specific skills that they have to master or review and do that in your reading group. For example, I have 20 kids in my reading group. I have 12 in one book and 6 in another. Plus not all these kids are in my homeroom so I have to check over the printout of the other classes they come from. Then we are supposed to go to our files and find workbook pages or worksheets or games or whatever for each one of these skills and then you group the kids accordingly.

So if you have the kids who need to "learn" the ing *ending. Now the way they test the* ing *ending is, for example, there's a sentence with a word without the ending on it and there's a blank there and then there are three endings and then they have to choose a, b, or c. So if the ending is supposed to be* ing*, so and so is speaking, and there's an* s *ending, and an* er *ending and* ing *ending and so on. Well, the kid is going to look at that and as they always do when they fill in the blanks, they're just going to glance at it and figure out that one of those endings makes a pretty good ending for that word. They never read the whole sentence. They're used to a world of filling blanks without it meaning anything. I mean it's meaningless work. It really is. So they miss that and that means that they haven't mastered the* ing *suffix. Now, that's nonsense. (Y, 1981)*

I like to figure out what is going on with a kid and possibly piece it back together again, but I'm bound in terms of the certain objectives that the kids have to meet and I have to see that they meet those specific objectives. If they don't meet them it falls on my shoulders. These objectives are judged by the school committee and by tests. Right now, I'm really putting up a real fight against these standardized tests that these kids are being subjected to. I dislike that type of regimented testing. I think it is very cruel. I'd rather have curriculum that is based on the child's needs. I would not have curriculum imposed upon them [the tests] because I think certain kids are able to learn at certain times in their lives and other kids are able to learn at other times. (AA, 1981)

The teacher, who knows the children as idiosyncratic, highly individual people, must administer tests

that yield quantifiable results easily transferrable to charts and tables. This involves distortion. The teacher cannot simply stop to share a child's joy over her accomplishments or commiserate with her in her problems. The teacher must first *translate* the pupil's progress as defined by testmakers and publishers. Only then can it be officially recorded that the pupil has learned a fact or is able to reach an opinion. The role of comforter and educator yields to that of recorder and judge:

We were all so very conscious of teaching subject matter that we were not teaching the children; we were just teaching the subject. I had made the determination, "I'm not going to teach like that." I almost don't care if a kid doesn't know how to add if he knows how to be nice to another human being and if he respects himself. I think that's very important. (W, 1980)

The same teacher in a later interview:

I think the happiest day of my life was when I got back the reading tests and found out that the exact percentage of kids in the other two first grades were all reading on the same level. They had 25% of the kids who were below grade level and so did I. (W, 1981)

My principal gets upset because he doesn't see enough low science and social studies marks that should correlate well with reading . . . He complains about this in general . . . if they don't read well, how could they be doing well in science and social studies. He's also the same person who told us that . . . if they're in the 8th or 9th stanine that means they're an A or B student and their report card marks should reflect this. (C, 1980)

I think sometimes I get "Hurry up, hurry up, hurry up," cramming work down their throats in an effort to get them up to grade level. I think that's one of the problems I have. I've got to complete all this work. There's so much talk about writing competency, reading competency, math that in order to get your reading scores up at the end of the year, a lot of the teachers just don't like to do special programs. (Z, 1981)

I always got the feeling that a mother came up to kindergarten just looking at her child in a very, very, loving way. There's always this hope that this child may be somebody, you know, amount to something. And the minute you tag them in first grade as being top group, middle group, lower group, it took a little something from the child, it took a little spirit out

of the mother. You know, they have a very positive approach to the child until he gets labeled as a G or an S. I think they get a little saddened by it. "This is not my hope; this is not my great hope." (E, 1979)

The teacher, under attack for failing to help children reach arbitrary grade level goals, accedes to the greater wisdom of the commercial test makers and the research academics. Once started on the road to quantification, the method becomes addictive, even for attributes other than achievement:

I went to a very exciting convention about learning style. They have been doing a lot of research on it and finally validated a reliable test so that you can give it to kids so that you can determine learning style . . . It's a multiple choice test of a hundred questions, just very simple questions . . . It's like the Stanford Diagnostic that tells you exactly what you need to know about a kid and all. Even if you did it yourself you wouldn't really figure it out -- what the computer can do, put all the little things together. (F, 1979)

Principals and school board members then use the same types of evaluation created by the researcher to evaluate teachers. The new *objective* type of teacher evaluations that have recently been introduced into the schools are examples of such quantitative methods. They take great pains to code and enumerate the type, number and direction of the interactions of the teacher with her pupils within the classroom. She is not evaluated outside the classroom because presumably these contributions to the school as a whole, enhancing the sense of community of the school, are not properly considered her responsibility or more strongly, not really *her business.*

I had been in the town only two years when our school was slated for closing. The principal called us in one by one to tell us what our assignments would be for the next year. I knew I would be vying for a spot with three other nontenured teachers. All of them had taught in the school more years than I had. One is a widow with five kids. She taught down the hall from me and was a good, decent, caring teacher. When it was my turn, I said, "Please don't consider me. It will ruin the rest of my year to feel that everything I do will be toted up in consideration for that job. It would demoralize everyone and they would resent me. I just don't want to compete with Sue and her five kids." The principal turned to me and snapped, "That's what I get my green check for." (G, 1979)

I think the merit evaluation is even worse than seniority. I mean you look at the person next door to you and you say, "Gee, I wonder how many points they have. And I wonder how many points I have." With the seniority, it's up front. Okay, you have eight years. I have seven years, that's it. There's nothing I can do about it. But the merit thing. Oh, my God. In this particular school it has destroyed any type of relations that any teachers want to have with any person in the building. So instead of encouraging teachers to be more open about what they're doing, they're forcing teachers to be more inward. There hasn't been one bit of sharing in this school. When you're in a situation when you're in competition with another person for your job, that's not human. I think you're pitting one person against another. I think in this business you can't do that. Because we tell the kids that everybody is unique. Everybody learns at their own rate. Everybody performs in a different capacity. Yet, you're grouping all these teachers together and you're saying this is what we want you to do and this is what our standards are and if you don't conform, you don't meet them. That doesn't constitute a good teacher, just because a teacher has 100 points. (AA, 1981)

My principal says, you know, he could look in the room and in one second he knows everything that's going on. Well, yeah, he might get an idea of what's going on, but that doesn't mean it's the right idea, and you know, sometimes it's not . . . One day . . . I came back to my room after dittoing off papers, and there I am sorting my papers out on the table, and all of a sudden I realize there's a presence in my room -- my kids are all at art or music or something. And I look up, and there's the principal sitting in my room, with an evaluation sheet . . . writing down -- he's looking at the questions on the board, he's looking at the bulletin boards I've got up, he's looking at everything around and he wrote me up a detailed evaluation based on what he saw in my classroom when my kids weren't there and I wasn't there. (C, 1980)

The more quantitative measures and national exams are used to evaluate the teacher, the more she will feel the need to use such quantitative methods to judge her students and other teachers. She is now the in-class representative of the national norms and country-wide bell curves. Once she has entered the child's progress into her books or on the blackboard, both she and her pupils are assumed to be easily understood and evaluated.

THE SCHOOLS HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF DEVELOPING THE WHOLE CHILD. BUT THE STRUCTURE OF THE INSTITUTION CONSTRICTS THE TYPES OF BEHAVIOR ACCEPTABLE IN TEACHERS AND PUPILS.

I don't think that there are people who are really close. I can just not picture one teacher going to another one in tears. I really can't. There's no one to run to. Not just for me. People really just don't get that close. And I think part of it is working in an impersonal system. You do what the boss tells you. You don't have choices. You file at 10:10, whether you like it or not . . . Everything is impersonally handled -- time, bells. (A, 1979)

I think the principal is a very authoritarian type. His reaction is, "Well, if you want the kid to be controlled, make them stay after school, make them do a written paper." That's him. But on the other hand, he has good sides. You know, he can appreciate poetry, he likes beautiful things in nature, he could be really touched by things. So there's some other sides to his personality, but the one that comes out all the time is the authoritarian. And part of that I think is because of the job. It brings out that side of his personality because it's just hard for him to control and deal with such a large school. (C, 1979)

When I changed from kindergarten to first grade teaching, it was a whole new scene. I just seemed to take on a first-grade personality. I think you just become a different type of person because you're more instructor and you don't have time to develop their personalities. The whole point in kindergarten was to develop this child so he's happy and likes school. If he's uncomfortable about something in his life, you try to make him loved. You get to first grade, forget it. I haven't got time for you. You've got to learn to read. You've got to finish that book before the second grade teacher sees you . . . Somebody raises their hand, in kindergarten you would listen. You're hoping to develop their language, and you listen . . . You got to first grade, it was, "Put your hand down. That's all the stories for now. Pay attention. Sit up." And they go to talk to you, "I don't want to hear your story. We're lining up. You have to go out. The clock doesn't wait for anybody. Be quiet. Be quiet. We have to leave the room." A whole new emphasis. (E, 1980)

A retired friend of the principal's said last year that down at Central Administration they have a list and next to your name is how well your kids did on the ICRT. They're holding you accountable. So the pres-

sure was on! You had to get these kids to pass the post-test. You just had to. When the kids turned in their test papers, I checked and if they had too many errors, I said, "You go back and do these over again." That's what it boiled down to. We came out first in the district. If you go down to the bulletin board in the main office you'll see the scores posted. (M, 1981)

In my school it's a luxury to think about those things -- interpersonal relationships, how to encourage spontaneity -- we have to teach the basic skills for life. Basic skills, that's the most important thing I teach them. Reading and math because those are the tools to succeed in life, you know, to help you live. (H, 1980)

I really feel that it's a total either/or, the way my current school sets it up. Either you're nice to the kids or you teach basic skills which I really feel is the bind that school puts me in . . . But I have trouble weighing time put into children versus time put into skills and I really do think those things come up against each other and I'm not strong enough to balance them on my own. (A, 1979)

I've learned a lot about how scapegoating needs to be stopped at the first possible opportunity. My first instinct is to say, "Stop the world, we're going to talk about this." But in this school I can't suspend the schedule. So there's not any time for soul-searching, heart to heart. I could stick a little in that 25-minute math block. I could stick a little in that one-half hour when you get to passing papers. So I'm really stifled in handling things my way by that. Yet I'm not placing a whole lot of faith in traditional discipline. So I'm in a real conflict -- I'm doing what I feel is wrong. (A, 1980)

I worry because, for instance, the math program that I'm not particularly fond of, I work on that afternoon rather than let it take up my arithmetic time in the morning, and I find the more I buy into this arithmetic series, the less time for music, the less time for art, the less time for things that I think are a very important part of my grade level or any grade level. I think this kind of thing is coming in a lot more. And I get really nervous as I see myself playing the piano less and have them all run around the room -- you know, the kind of thing I used to love to do. And yet I think, "Come on, come on. It's time for this, we've got to do that, we've got to be here." And I keep saying, "You're getting old." Then I hear younger teachers with some of the same concerns. (L, 1981)

EDUCATION IS CHARGED WITH THE SOCIAL TASK OF PROVIDING EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR THE SCHOOL-AGE POPULATION OF A PLURALISTIC, MULTI-LEVEL SOCIETY. BUT THE STRUCTURE OF SCHOOLS EMPHASIZES COMPARATIVE WORTH AND INCREASES COMPETITION NOT ONLY AMONG THE PUPILS BUT ALSO AMONG PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND ADMINISTRATORS.

We never had any administrative encouragement to work together. There was never any time, there was never any made, there were very few group decisions. It's a very individual thing, if you found someone you wanted to share materials with, you did it on your own. No, nobody has ever encouraged that route . . . It only comes from the individual teachers in our building. None of it is encouraged by the principal. (D, 1979)

You're making yourself vulnerable by even appreciating somebody else's work. I find that a real problem that people tend not to adopt each other's ideas because they feel it reflects on them that they don't have their own ideas. It's courtesy, when somebody does a bulletin board in the corridor, to say, "Isn't that nice," but as far as working together on something, as far as learning from other teachers, we're much too threatened. (A, 1979)

The teacher in the room next to me seemed to be very friendly. I'd been in and out of her classroom, sort of looked around and made some nice comments about it. I asked her once if she would mind sharing a ditto sheet or something . . . I just wanted to see how she did it . . . She had a worksheet planned for her kids. It looked really good and I had been struggling to get one that looks decent . . . I asked her if she had any extra ones that I could have and she said, "No!" And she said, "I'm sick and tired of you asking!" Now I'd never asked for any equipment or anything. "You come in here and you look around the room." She was really, I mean I couldn't believe it . . . I don't know why she felt threatened. What was I going to do with this paper? Do one better? Put it up on the wall? I don't know. But it was a terrible, terrible feeling. (B, 1980)

If there's a kid in the classroom that a teacher is having a problem with, and it looks like there might be something the matter, they go through the core evaluation process, and they discover that he does, he has an auditory figure-ground problem, so automatically he's going to get picked up by the person in charge of auditory figure-ground problems. So now we've created a label for a kid and a person to deal with that label. There's a pattern and the pattern is they're minority kids, they are ESL kids, they are the kids who walk to

the beat of a different drummer. (W, 1980)

We have to have kids till the last day of school. Why doesn't everybody have to have kids? Now people who are specialists in tutoring kids have to do a lot of testing and writing of reports. We have to write reports four times a year. We have report cards. I have to write my core. I have three of those to write. I realized I was really pissed. (B, 1979)

You get your class list, but beside it if for any reason a child is in your room for any reason other than it was the luck of the draw, the reason will be noted. It could be that this child, well, any problems with the child you will need to know about, special needs, or ED or anything like that. The code beside them also has an "R" beside any that are requests. It's human nature to count up how many requests you get, for crying out loud. (R, 1981)

A parent came to visit my room. Her child will be in my grade next year. When she left I went right down to the principal and said, "No way." He said, "Don't worry. You'll be chosen." But that was not the point. The point was, that wasn't what I was worried about at all. I've just been so against it ever since it started. I hate them shopping for teachers and that's what they do. They shopped from school to school when it was open enrollment in the town. (L, 1981)

He [the principal] has come into my classroom and said to me, "How are you handling the reading?" I show him my plan. He said, "Oh, good. I'm trying to get some ideas for another teacher. I don't think she's handling her reading well. I want to be able to say that this is what I've seen in other classrooms. Do you mind if I take this?" I say, "Well, not really, if you feel that it's absolutely necessary, then go ahead." He's taken my plans. (QQ, 1981)

At our school the scores are low compared to much of the town. Our principal found out that at many of the other schools on the hill [the more affluent part of town] if they go to reading resource or if they're in 766, they do not test them. You see it's not a sampling of the whole school. It's a sampling of the children who do well. Now he has been checking and he has been really a thorn in the sides of the principals' meeting. (PP, 1981)

The superintendent made it very clear that the quote-unquote more aggressive schools would get funding and materials for the programs they wanted . . . He said, "The more aggressive buildings will get the money. If

there's something you want to do in your building and you can give us a good reason for it, then you'll get the money . . . If you really push for it, then we may be able to make it available to you." Some schools took advantage of that, like the _____ School. They have a lot of parents who know how to write proposals and they always get their way. (W, 1981)

PUBLIC EDUCATION IS CHARGED WITH UPHOLDING DEMOCRACY BY DEVELOPING AN ELECTORATE CAPABLE OF CRITICAL THINKING AND THE INTELLIGENT BALANCING OF ALTERNATIVES: BUT TEACHERS ARE REQUIRED TO PURSUE THIS GOAL BY INCREASINGLY MECHANICAL, TECHNICAL MEANS.

Until recently the teacher's recommendation was all that was needed to get a child into the Gifted and Talented program. You had a form you had to fill out, but it was a pretty liberal form. It was all comments. And you could comment on the fact that the child was a plugger, and he didn't necessarily have to have a totally super high I.Q. But now they won't even let you recommend a kid if he hasn't done well on these stupid CTBS's. This kid has to have scored beyond a certain point before they'll even take him and test him. (R, 1980)

The principal started another program in kindergarten that he wanted to adopt, working with small groups, using electronic equipment like headsets and things, very carefully planned individualizing instruction with the children. He was structuring, planning 15-minute segments. He wanted to try something new. We would have a half-hour of concentrated teaching in small groups . . . So you worked on listening to sounds or you worked on your workbooks in small groups and then after 15 minutes it was (clap hands) change groups. And no matter what you had to stop at that point. There was one little girl who had had kidney surgery in my room who really wasn't learning and had a lot of problems and I felt couldn't sit and do the work like that. And I remember one day when I said, "You know, she just had kidney surgery," he said, "I'm tired of hearing about her kidney surgery. I'm tired of hearing emotional things blamed for reading problems." It's a very cut and dry thing. (H, 1981)

I think the tests are not valid because they give two examples typically for each skill and the skills are broken down into such discrete little components. I mean no human being ever learned anything that way. I believe in sequential teaching and so on but you don't learn the sh sound by simply having two examples of it. That's the way it comes out on the computer printout.

Another thing that bothers me is that the test is just an extension ad nauseum of the workbooks with the little blanks that you fill in and the children have learned long since that you have a pretty good chance if you just sort of skim a page. You have a pretty good chance without ever reading it or learning anything from it of getting 50%-75% right by just filling in something you see on the page. They're right. They're absolutely right. (Y, 1981)

I know that I'm very program oriented, I think, and skill oriented maybe. What is this kid going to achieve that can be measured? Maybe it's because the principal's always talking about whether our scores went up or down. I told you about the Metropolitan Test. It's asinine. But I still have to deal with comments like that. I think there's a lot of that in teaching. What are you and the kids going to be measured against. So you've got to get going on the old treadmill and pump it into them. (Z, 1981)

*We can't use any supplementary materials until we've finished all the textbook work . . . I can show you the memo. [The memo read: "Teachers are reminded that only materials found in the adopted textbooks can be duplicated. Supplementary materials are not to be stenciled and duplicated. It is the feeling of the administration that materials in the textbooks are adequate and must be completed before other materials are to be introduced in the curriculum."] Even the kids who are repeating go back through the same materials . . . Last week I was teaching a reading lesson and the story was about Galileo. Now I have a wonderful ditto about Galileo and telescopes. But it's from the science unit, so I couldn't use it. The administrator's aide controls the ditto machine and files all the dittos that are run off. If we have any supplementary dittos, they have to be cleared first. (McCutcheon, 1980)**

I think these diagnostic tests are another one of these things where somebody came up with the idea. Somebody who has a little empire to run sold somebody in the school department. Descriptively it sounds wonderful. You test each child and you know exactly what they need. It's a prescriptive thing. You look at their profile and you say, "Oh good, this child needs to study this and this and this." It sounds wonderful. Now that's based on two assumptions. One is that we don't know ourselves how the children are doing. Secondly, the other assumption is that the kinds of things that are being tested there are more important than the kinds of things such as general comprehension and following directions and understanding that the

*Gail McCutcheon, "How Do Elementary Schoolteachers Plan?" *The Elementary School Journal*, September 1980, 8.

whole thing has to hang together to mean something. The tests simply don't test for that kind of general reading ability. (Y, 1981)

The director has sent word down to the building that everybody is supposed to be reading in _____ (a certain basal reading series) and if they're not, he wanted the names of the teachers and children sent to the office. So he was keeping touch, I got into hell for saying some kids couldn't read it and I wanted to use the other one, that really worked. He kept saying, "No, put 'em in _____." He wanted them in _____ and that was the end of it . . . He doesn't take his own teachers' expertise in consideration at all. Maybe he really believes his own teachers don't have any expertise or at least he doesn't value it. (D, 1980)

I'm realizing that the other third grade teacher who is my colleague, with whom I exchange children for reading, has what is presumably the middle group. I have presumably the top group and bottom group. I find out that her top group is almost where my top group is, and we've been on our book since the beginning of the year, and she didn't start it until just two months ago. It makes me feel that maybe I'm holding these kids back, but consensus is that these books are pretty hard. They've got some rather intriguing stories, ones that are not just run-of-the-mill ordinary kinds of stories, with a lot of metaphorical language and different kinds of fiction and fantasy. We do a lot with that sort of thing. I just feel really that I don't know if I'm doing the right thing in spending all that time on each story and having the children do a lot of things with each story. She's just obviously bombing through this book. A story a day, I guess. It makes me nervous that somebody is going to say I'm not a very good teacher. I really feel as though my kids are getting a great deal out of their reading. But it's one of those things that doesn't look good on paper. (Y, 1980)

Everybody had a curriculum and there were certain things to be mastered and certain things to be introduced and a lot of times I didn't get to some of the things that had to be mastered let alone introduced because my kids simply could not do it and it made no sense to me to push through 27 chapters of a math book just because a curriculum says I have to. Some of the other teachers felt as I did that these were difficult things and it made no sense to push on whereas some of the teachers were really bound by the curriculum, felt obligated if it said by December you should have taught time, by December you taught time . . . For myself, I find on a day-to-day basis I get caught up in

teaching these things and forget the people that you're teaching, so all that gets lost. So if you don't make a point to sort of stop and talk about feelings and talk about friendships and talk, it doesn't get done. You get too caught up in content. It's not spoken to or encouraged because there simply isn't enough time. The kid who's not right in the middle of the road, you find you don't have time to reach out and meet his needs, his creativity, give him a chance to offer an alternative suggestion. I felt a tremendous, tremendous time pressure. You just find task, task, task, and there's never enough time. (W, 1981)

2

The Making of Conflict, 1850-1950

*In the very period when the gospel of the home as woman's only proper sphere was preached most loudly, it was discovered that women were the natural teachers of youth, could do the job even better than men, and were to be preferred for such employment. This was always provided, of course, that they would work at the proper wage differential -- 30 to 50 percent of the wages paid male teachers was considered appropriate.**

*Lerner, Gerda, "The lady and the mill girl: changes in the status of women in the age of Jackson, 1800-1840," *A Heritage of Her Own* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979).

The uncovering in the 1970s, of teacher dissatisfaction, as if it were a contemporary phenomenon, obscures the fact that the basic contradictory demands on teachers have existed since the doors of the brick grammar school first closed behind a staff of schoolmarms, a male principal, and a rush of youngsters. The emphasis on individual response, implicit in current discussions on teacher burnout, deadwood, professionalization, and effective schools, has had its ideological and structural counterparts from the inception of public school teaching. For each new level of control that has been introduced -- the switch from the model of the one-room school to a centralized urban bureaucracy, the introduction of intelligence tests and test experts to interpret them, the present-day use of computers to diagnose and prescribe "enhanced individualized learning modes" to both teachers and students -- a concomitant ideology and rationale have been added to obscure the increased tensions that such fragmentation creates.

The basic work situation of the female elementary school teacher was first established by the common school movement of the mid-1800s. The common school movement broadened the conception of school from the colonial pattern of privately funded academies serving an elite to publicly supported institutions through which the government would provide opportunities to overcome socially inherited disadvantages. Education was to be the great equalizer. At the same time, the movement recognized that children entered schools with a wide range of needs. Thus, while charged with promoting the individual intellectual development of each child, the school took on the additional role of soothing, regulating, and resolving the frictions that developed when children became aware of

these differences. The contradictory nature of these two roles was institutionally resolved by allocating to the master and the normal school dean, who were usually male, the task of devising curriculum materials and establishing institutional procedures, while delegating to the teachers, who were usually female, the responsibility for reconciling children to their disparate needs.

Teaching was heralded as *woman's true profession*, but not because teaching followed the classic definition of a profession whose members controlled a shared body of specialized knowledge. The claim to professionalism of a 19th century teacher rested on the ideology of women's birthright of maternal solicitude:

*From the beginning, sex segregation was part of the design of the urban graded school. Women's supposed comparative advantage in nurturance, patience and understanding of children led the architects of the urban school system to slot women in primary school teaching . . . By structuring jobs to take advantage of sex-role stereotypes about women's responsiveness to rules and male authority, and men's presumed ability to manage women, urban school boards were able to enhance their ability to control the curriculum, students and personnel. Male managers in the 19th century urban schools regulated the core activities of instruction through standardized promotional examinations on the content of the prescribed curriculum and strict supervision to ensure that teachers were following mandated techniques. Rules were highly prescriptive. Given this purpose of tight control, women were ideal employees. With few alternative occupations and accustomed to patriarchical authority, they mostly did what their male superiors ordered.**

*Myra H. Strober and David Tyack, "Why Do Women Teach and Men Manage?" *Signs*, Spring 1980, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Highly prescriptive methods were at the core of teacher training since it was in the area of curriculum that teachers presumably required careful guidance and monitoring.

To question these methods would mean rebelling against accepted gender roles and the strongly socialized belief that those in positions of authority were inherently wiser. It would also mean losing the protection of following an approved model.

What I mean is, you know, there's sort of a picture, sort of your old schoolmarm, old maid teacher. They're strict but they teach you so well. They know everything. They've been teaching for years. They know all the ropes. They know the technical part of teaching. They know to write a lesson plan. They know how to organize a room. They know phonics, in and out. They can give you any rule of phonics. There's some train-

ing there they can refer to. There's a lot of strength there. But sometimes I feel that they're one track. They all come along the same track and there's not a lot of creativity. In their training they have to go step by step. And you cannot jump from step two to step four. You have to go step two, three, four, five, and six. And that if they were allowed to feel their way along a little bit more, it would be more exciting. (Z, 1980)

They [state teachers colleges] only had one goal, and that was to turn out fellows and girls that would step right into a classroom and know what they were doing. They achieved that, they really did. Blackboard writing, attendance register. There was nothing about the running of the classroom that they hadn't covered, really. (V, 1980)

I used to have a much better tolerance for noise, but the principal has a very low tolerance and I sort of absorbed that. I can't tell you, all these years later, how very nervous it makes me when there's noise. So a lot of the time I can't allow a lot of things in the room to get used because they talk while they're using them. So I'm just a lot more directive and authoritarian. Once I asked a teacher, "How do you keep your kids under control?" and she said, "Well, you have to be a dictator." And it took me about two or three years to understand what that meant. (C, 1980)

Within the given of a carefully controlled set of work restrictions, the teacher's institutional style tended to become more authoritarian as she sought control over student behavior, the only task that was hers alone and the only means by which she was considered unique.

Any classroom tension that developed from such a rigidly predetermined system was to be eased by improving the teacher's ability to soothe children when their inability to meet standards caused problems. Gaining collective control over curriculum decisions or system-wide policies, the basis of such competitive tensions, was discouraged.

We don't have any choice when they give you those books . . . They want everyone in this system to be in this . . . I felt you had to cover them by hook or by crook. It didn't mean everybody knew it or was able to learn it . . . We had only the hardest of books and workbooks to work with . . . We're practically killing ourselves trying to get enough reading into the low group . . . You get very frustrated trying to teach it . . . The expectations were absolutely way out of line. And

that's why the frustration on our part, and the youngsters. (D, 1980)

The highly prescriptive nature of teaching -- in which neither teacher nor student could deviate from a set norm -- exonerated both of them from responsibility for upgrading the education of pupils. The assumption by school boards that all *qualified* teachers would approach their classrooms in essentially the same manner, strengthened by the school board's knowledge that teachers had little selection of materials and texts, paradoxically freed teachers from competitive comparisons with their colleagues. If a student could not read in the fourth grade reader, it was simply accepted as an immutable fact that neither teacher nor pupil could change. Until the 1950s there was no finely graded system of specialists and curriculum advisors to interpret such deviations. Once a teacher finished the *basic subjects* each day, the less loosely defined attributes of nurturance for which she was hired could be exercised without fear of falling behind an adjusted norm. Teachers put on plays, directed marching bands, and spent whole afternoons with their classrooms drawing clouds or leading their pupils in Halloween parades through town.

I had a self-contained classroom. I just remember glorious afternoons where you would have like an hour and a half to do anything you wanted to do. I didn't have specialists. So we could meander through the day and if we wanted to do more reading we could do more reading. If we wanted to do a special project, we'd just kick math out. And you could make a huge mess of the room and invite people in . . . There was just more of a family feeling with your own class. (Z, 1981)

In addition, teachers also regularly and creatively adjusted prescribed curriculum methods and school-wide policies to meet the needs of individual pupils. Many teachers knew that strict adherence to administrative fiat would create unbearable tensions and considerable boredom for both themselves and their pupils. But they were careful to make sure that their own modifications were not seen as too original by their administrators, nor to give any signal that they considered their judgment to be equal to their superiors.

There is no facility for ever discussing anything. The former principal pretty much handled things his own way. If you knew how to handle him, you would go with whatever your problem was or whatever your suggestion was and be very clever about it and discuss it with him when he's in a very good mood and give him the answer

and let him think that he solved the whole problem. And if you could do that, it worked out fine. If you just say, "The children in the cafeteria are behaving terribly. Something has to be done, they just can't run any old place. Okay, Jim, I'll sit down and I'll draw a picture of the tables and I'll write down just how many children sit in each room and number the tables and then we'll have a diagram of just exactly where everybody goes." "Oh, that's a good idea" -- and then we'll have a meeting and he tells everybody of how he thought about this idea. (D, 1980)

Ironically, combining the qualities of nurturance and self-sacrifice of woman's role in the home with the wage earning position forced women in many school districts to choose between the two life choices. If women were expected to be truly self-sacrificing, they could hardly be expected to serve two masters. Married women, and later women who married and became pregnant, were forced to leave the field. Men were not required to make such choices as they were not hired for the same reasons.

I sort of always wanted to teach ever since I was a little girl and had any idea of the future. I always wanted very much to have children. When I was a little girl . . . if you were a teacher you sort of had to be an old maid. All of my teachers, they were all unmarried. I think, in fact, that if it wasn't an actual rule, that is, written in the contract, it was an unwritten rule that a woman had to be able to devote her whole self to the job. Otherwise, she could not possibly handle it, right? A man could be a provider and a husband and everything else and run a profession, but a woman couldn't possibly handle it. So I was really broken up about that when I was a young girl, a teenager and thinking of my future. And my career and my desire for children. (Y, 1980)

D. C. Lortie, *Schoolteacher, A Sociological Survey* (Chicago, 1975).

As Lortie has pointed out, working in schools was a one-step career, at least for women, and for those men who chose to remain in such a woman-identified role. For most men, it was merely one step in a multi-leveled career as an educator, one that often expanded to include principal, district supervisor, and perhaps superintendent.

Men in elementary education back in the early, middle fifties were a rarity. Those fellows had been told they probably would be principals very quickly if they went into elementary . . . Most of the fellows had intended to be junior high teachers but they were told at that juncture that if they went into the elementary program they could practically guarantee them they

would be principals within two or three years and they were. (V, 1981)

What is not generally recognized is that the one dimensionality of teaching was the result of the 19th century structuring of the schools which separated the intellectual and managerial functions of the school as a whole -- the pace and scope of curriculum, the allocation of budget, the hiring of staff -- from the day-to-day running of individual classrooms.

You have to make yourself very well known to get any recognition in this system. I've decided that. You have to belong to the teachers' union and the negotiating team and negotiate with these people. Then I think they get a feeling of your strengths and weaknesses and get to know you . . . I was just thinking the other day, who are the busy little bees that do all the dirty work, put together minimum competency standards and tests, do all background work for curriculum decisions? Women. Who's on the negotiating team? Men. And I think if you don't do those things there is no other way they get to know you because they certainly don't go in classrooms. No one would ever recognize you for that. And that's what I've done all my life and I don't think they know me from a hole in the wall. Or if they did, it doesn't really count. (D, 1979)

Dividing these functions in two allowed for a narrowing of the job description of the teacher, with the result that following one's job description leads to feelings of stagnation.

Elementary school teachers, each working in a separate room, were told that they had an enormous impact on the life of each of their students. But working in such isolation prevents teachers from influencing adults and pupils outside the classroom.

It's a vacuum. It's a vacuum. You come in here and you close the door. And what goes on in here, goes on in here, and it doesn't in any way seem to affect anything that goes on outside the classroom. And I wish that it could. I really do. (W, 1981)

3

The New Ideology: "Professional Teaching," 1950 thru the 1970s

A new type of teacher began entering the field in the 1950s when the postwar baby boom created an unprecedented strain on existing facilities and staff. While women were forced to relinquish positions they had attained in male-dominated occupations in order to make way for returning GI's, married women were assured that teaching would be one field where they would not be accused of upsetting the division of sex roles. Many barriers to the profession were dropped, and a whole segment of potential teaching candidates who had previously been excluded from the profession were now encouraged to apply. The desire to perform a socially approved task appealed to many women who were entering the workforce in increasing numbers from liberal arts colleges. Unlike their normal school predecessors, they had not all originally conceived of themselves as teachers but often were unable to find work in other fields. The prohibition against hiring married women was dropped in an all-out scramble to recruit large numbers to teaching. Indeed, there was an intense ideological campaign to lure them to the field. Thus, to the teacher college graduate was added a new group of teachers -- those who had received their education in liberal arts colleges where teacher training was only a part of their degree seeking.*

*Out of every five female employed university graduates of the 1950s, three entered teaching. Oakley, Ann, *Woman's Work: the Housewife, Past and Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974).

*For more information, contact Boston Women's Teachers' Group, Inc., P.O. Box 169, W. Somerville, MA 02144.

The prescriptive methods and specific classroom management techniques of the teacher colleges were not emphasized to liberal arts students. Instead, the education courses offered to liberal arts students underscored the importance of entering schools with a distinct philosophy of education not to be found in a static model of classroom life. The approach to understanding and handling the child was reformulated in terms of the new professional careers emerging from the rising sciences of psychology and sociology. Teachers were trained in analyzing the child as a distinct personality and in developing curriculum that would be tailored to individual needs.

A lot was coming out at that time about how important it was, developmentally, for children to learn certain things at certain phases of their growth. Otherwise, they would never learn them as well. I started thinking about it rationally and sort of professionally. So

this sort of meshed with my own feelings and my love for children and that I was able to deal with them well. I felt that that was an accomplishment that I had. (Y, 1980)

The liberal arts graduate soon discovered that the position of teacher had not been reformulated in line with her training. While the job description had been upgraded to recruit middle-class teachers into the field, the structure of the school itself had changed little. Teacher colleges, through the design of its courses, had adjusted its graduates to the institutional constraints on teachers and pupils found in schools, but the training liberal arts graduates received prepared them poorly for these constraints:

My first year I had the extra class. There were just too many kids which is why they hired me. I was isolated from other teachers, so I didn't have them for support. I didn't know how I was supposed to know what to teach in the grade. I had very few books, and I was too embarrassed to ask anybody, "What should I teach in the second grade?" I thought, "What's wrong with me that I didn't learn this in college, what to teach in every grade?" And I was absolutely made to feel by the principal that it was my fault. Absolutely. And I'd say that has never stopped influencing me. (C, 1980)

Armed with a philosophy of education that emphasized a more affective approach to cognitive development, teachings' new recruits came up hard against the inherent competitive nature of schooling and the structural barriers that emphasized relative worth for both teacher and pupil. Most made it through the first traumatic years only with the help of veteran teachers, who socialized them in the methods that were tailored to life inside the bureaucracy of schools.

I taught across the hall from someone who was a good disciplinarian, very well organized, and she took me by the hand. She knew I was young, the type of teacher who wasn't "well-trained." She wasn't saying, "You're doing a crummy job," but her attitude was, "Well, why don't we do it this way, dear?" She would like team teach. "This is how you teach second grade." She gave me materials. She just set me up. She was wonderful. I just thought she was the most marvelous thing because she led me through my second year teaching. These people just took me under their wing and, you know, just laid it all out for me. (Z, 1980)

Others learned through the chaos and confusion

of their first years when they struggled to adjust to the established order as the only way to provide evidence of competency.

I became really *skills-oriented. I really feel that is terribly, terribly important, and that every time I think of myself going off the track I have to remember, "Well, look, what I can give these children. The best thing I can do for them is to provide them with skills that they are going to need to face a very difficult world." That's technique, that's technology. That's all it is, but I can do that. The affection will come along with it, and the affirmation will come along with their feeling good about themselves and having success. So I think one thing that I was a little less muddy in my mind as I went along about what I really wanted to achieve. I went in. I wanted to change the world. Everybody does, I guess. Your own little world. Not only can you not do that, but it's not even desirable. (Y, 1980)*

Teachers were able to exchange techniques as long as the competency of one did not imply the failure of the other. During the fifties the liberal arts graduates recruited to teaching were not threatening to their colleagues nor threatened by them. Married women did not see their jobs as their major source of self-definition. They viewed themselves and were viewed primarily as wives and mothers.

I think that I went through a period of time where, the period we're talking about, I really didn't get that much, what I really would have liked to have gotten from my profession personally. I guess during those years as a typical female I sublimated that. I wasn't supposed to get that much. I had my kids at home to think about and that was paramount. And my job was really secondary, so I didn't really look to it to get the kind of stuff that I would perhaps expect from it. (OO, 1980)

The ability to find another teaching job easily or to leave for a socially approved feminine alternative, either in the home or the workplace, dissipated much of the teacher's anger or dissatisfaction.

I was in _____ only that year. Halfway through the year I was contacted by the assistant superintendent in another town who had my application, and, to make a long story short, he asked if I would come to his system right then and there, and I said I would not because I already had the class and it was December. He said, "I don't know what we can find in the spring. We may not have it." But I took my chances

and come spring there was still a job. So I came here. (BB, 1979)

Schools had solved the problem of finding people willing to teach the expanding school population of the fifties and sixties, but there was no discussion of substantive changes in the scope of teachers' responsibilities that might lead to a more effective staffing of schools. Instead, superintendents decreed the need to enlist a different type of personnel who viewed their job as one without set hours, who would take risks, whose allegiance to their pupils and a belief in their pupils' potential were paramount. Married women with children were no longer the ideal employees. A teacher in an alternative elementary school:

You have to be in there with those kids no matter what. Most of the teachers are single or divorced women. I think that the commitment you have to make to this school is such that it's easier if you're not married. You don't have a heavy family demand. (KK, 1980)

What took place redefined teaching as *women's true profession*, with the emphasis in that phrase no longer falling on the word *women*, but on the word *profession*. Profession implied "special expertise based on broad theoretical knowledge and an extended training." The capacity to be nurturing still had value for the system. In fact, that quality was needed even more in schools that now were being asked to rededicate themselves to facing racial and economic differences within a highly competitive society. The ideal professional teacher combined the previous role of nurturer with a new awareness of cognitive development and technique. This new emphasis permitted incorporating the older definition of women's true profession within the new. The two-pronged criticism of schooling -- that it perpetuated societal inequities while deadening the minds of all -- could be solved by recruiting teachers who viewed their task from a *professional* perspective. They could and would solve such issues through a combination of diligence and strength of personality along with adherence to scientifically derived sources of information:

The education department here had big illusions of changing the whole world. They told us that everything we ever knew about teaching and the experiences we had had as students were wrong. Everything was wrong. It was pretty traumatic. Pretty soon, I was writing 20 lesson plans a night with behavioral objectives. I was also supposed to be writing manipulative materials for kids to use because books were out. I mean you were really supposed to turn up your nose at that. You were

supposed to write your own things. It was supposed to come from within, based on the children's needs, based on what you felt would be valid for them to learn. This was expected of undergraduate teachers and we were expected to create from a vacuum. That's about what it amounted to. (HH, 1981)

Prospective teachers were recruited with the image of teaching as a *calling*, a view that implicitly disparaged those who had entered the field out of economic necessity or a lack of encouragement to pursue other fields.

In those days, one did not converse with one's parents. One was told what one was going to do. And that really was the way it was. I did not think, "Oh, what fun it would be" or "How awful it would be to be an elementary school teacher." Once I was enrolled in school (a liberal arts college emphasizing teacher training) it automatically meant I would go into elementary education. (L, 1980)

When my children were growing up, or when they had gotten into junior high school and high school it seemed as if it was going to be helpful to have some money for college. Plus the hours were good for a mother and I had my summers off. (X, 1980)

My mother made it for me (the decision to enter teaching). When I was in college, she always told me to take teaching courses. I said, "No, no, no. I don't want to teach." I had an English major at school and in my senior year I realized I was trained to do nothing. In the summer after my senior year of college I was hysterical because I had no job, no income; so all of a sudden teaching looked good. (Z, 1980)

I just hated women who said, "I'll be a teacher. Then I can be home when the kids get home." I thought that was lousy motivation for teaching. And now I'm coming at it from a slightly different angle, saying that if that's part of your reason for job satisfaction you can still do a good job as a teacher, and there's nothing wrong with saying that you love the hours. (A, 1980)

A number of books written in the sixties had an enormous impact in advancing this new ideology. Many of the authors -- John Holt, Jonathan Kozol, Herbert Kohl -- were new to teaching and maintained a psychological distance from the vast army of public school teachers. Each of these authors was determined not to become one of *them*. Most were men, generally young,

*Why were most of the authors who were read so avidly and circulated so widely, men? It's probably fair to say that more women than men read those books, simply because the great majority of teachers, then as today, are women. Were women not writing the same kinds of books, or were publishers not interested in publishing them?

Certainly we all knew women who were inspiring teachers, and we believed our own teaching was struggling toward the same goals as Holt, Kozol, Kohl and the like. There was certainly the hope that if we worked as hard as they did, we too would be recognized for our talents. At the time, it never occurred to us that society, our administrators, our colleagues, and we ourselves saw us as *women* schoolteachers, that is to say inherently suited to the role but, in that very *naturalness*, not able to change, nor seen as the change-makers no matter what we did, being part of the *natural* system. We didn't understand that the experience of these male teachers could never be applicable to our own experiences.

We were also, through early socialization and through our own training, conditioned to concentrate on the particularities of our individual classrooms. We, too, had 36 children in our classrooms, but we were acutely aware of how our own inadequacies balanced the breakthroughs that came when a class came alive

often educated at prestigious universities, and they had *chosen* teaching.*

Their books expressed the paradoxical feelings of despair and hope. Despair was voiced in the descriptions of schools' mindlessness, their racism and class bias. The effects of the school's environment upon children were mercilessly exposed. Nothing was said about the school's effect on teachers or on the relationship between what happens to the child and what happens to the teacher.

The books gave hope to teachers -- to new teachers the hope that they too could be forces of change; to veteran teachers the idea that while others surrounding them were easily identifiable as insensitive or unwilling to *give*, those who were willing could maintain a higher degree of dedication and continue to find meaning in their field. It was up to the individual teacher.

I always loved children. I was an only child but I come from a big extended family and we always had young ones in my early teens. I became sort of politicized and eager to change the world. I thought that that was the capacity in which I could do my best by educating young children to the glories of the world. (Y, 1980)

There's a sixties urge toward social reform which I think is where I still am -- I accepted the whole notion of pulling up the culturally deprived -- getting the kids early enough, intervening in lives, cutting the cycle of failure. So that's one of the reasons I think I entered teaching. I have a gut commitment somewhere to working in a helping field. (A, 1979)

Staff development often meant hiring a new person who would *show* the old-timers how it should be done. These new teachers expected that adherence to curriculum innovations and new teaching styles would gain them independence from the school system's hierarchy. The recruits were often dramatically different in class background and training from the other teachers, yet once placed found themselves no more powerful than their peers.

I took a classroom in a school where I had worked with the entire staff as a consultant. The principal said that if I was there, "Maybe you'll be able to keep things going." They gave me all the bad guys or at least it seemed that way. It was very frustrating because I knew too much. I expected way too much of myself. I expected to be able to go in there and do all these wonderful things all of a sudden. I also found a lot of things there that I hadn't been aware of as a consulting teacher the two previous years. What I

during a lesson on prepositions or the emergence of a previously depressed child as the star of the class play. Certainly these were triumphs, but they were not seen, by ourselves, our principals, our friends or our colleagues as anything particularly unusual or as providing insights or universal principles that would inspire others outside of our personal sphere of influence. They were simply part of the day-to-day highs and lows of teachers.

There were other books available, *My Country School Diary* and the works of Sylvia Ashton Warner and Lucy Sprague Mitchell. These books were written by women who were veteran teachers. Some of them were not new books, although they were reissued during the 1960s. They did not get the kind of publicity and circulation given to the books written by the men, who were far less experienced teachers. Or perhaps we did not see them as being as exciting to read as were the books written by the young men. These women had been teaching for years, and their experiences suggested that if you wanted to be a good teacher, you too had to work at it for years, with little recognition or even self-confidence until many years had been spent in a classroom, much of the time alone.

found was that on the surface everything was cooperative and beautiful, but underneath there was a lot of grumbling and dissension about what he was doing. He would have us attend these lengthy meetings where he would expound and he would ask for our input and then he'd make the decision and would completely ignore any input that we might have given him. (HH, 1980)

For the children in those classes, school may have been a very different experience, but for the teachers it was much the same.

Teachers entered schools wanting to grapple with the effects of societal tensions as they affected the children in their classrooms, but the methods promoted by such books focused their efforts on individual solutions by individual teachers. A black teacher:

I went to the district superintendent, who happened to be black himself, to ask for a transfer because after six years of being in that building, I felt the school had taken a toll on me. What he said to me in essence was, "We need you there, so if there's any way that you can reconcile yourself to the difficulties on a personal basis, I really wish you would because at this time I would not consider your request for transfer from that building." My feeling was when I left his office that whatever was to be done was to be done by me. I just really felt very locked in. So, what is typical of my behavior, I just went back to my classroom and redoubled my efforts to deal with the kids, and I guess to a certain extent to isolate myself from some of the currents that existed in the building, so that I wouldn't constantly feel the undercurrent that did exist. But it didn't work. I mean you can't be in the building and not be a part of what's going on. (W, 1981)

There were attempts to *restructure* schools. The open space concept, generally introduced by administrative fiat as a way of *freeing teachers and pupils*, frequently pitted teachers against each other for use of centralized resources. The openness of the space belied the fact that teachers were still placed in competition by the pace of workbooks and national norms.

I think you have to be so inflexible in an open space. It's like with a lot of people in the same bed. It's crowded. If you want to turn over, everybody has got to turn over. You can't do things that you feel you need to do spontaneously. If you feel like your kids need to do something active, it's going to disturb the other people in the open space. You've got to do this at this time because other people are doing this at

this time. You can't just be spontaneous and change and do something else. (HH, 1981)

Teachers were often eager to apply new methods, but recognized that new resources would be required if traditional standards were still to be met. A teacher in a working class district:

The building was specifically built for open classroom. All the teachers who were assigned to this building when it was opened opted for working in open space. They all took courses in it and were all told they would have learning resource centers, aides, a lot of equipment. They did get a lot of equipment ordered by central office. They never got the aides. I think after two or three years of going on the open space concept, they just said, "It's not working. We never got aides. We can't do learning centers when we're the only adults in the classroom with kids zipping around us." (Z, 1981)

Affluent districts provided such resources and encouraged teachers' creativity in implementing new programs. A teacher in an affluent suburb:

People believed in innovation, and one of the major changes I would say that's really come across to me in my years in education is that in those years we really believed that innovations could make a difference, that a new way of organizing ourselves and a new way of organizing children and a new way of teaching them this and a new book or a new machine to help them do this -- it was going to make a difference. And all those problems, reading problems and behavior problems, would be helped and cured. (BB, 1980)

The classroom door closed when teachers realized they were being asked to react to school-wide policies, not create them.

What I think happens around here from what I've been able to gather asking people is that people come in and after a few years they just sort of pull in. I don't know how much I can keep growing in that atmosphere. It's too isolating. There is no flow. It's not that people are nasty 'cause they're not. They're nice people, and they're friendly, but one of the problems is the downstairs which is K through 2 and one third grade never sees the upstairs teachers. The most we ever have might be 15 minutes once a week. The secrecy is another thing. You go up to the office and you ask questions. "It's okay. Don't worry about it." "Well, what about it?" "Don't worry. Just go back to your room. We'll let you know." My hunch is that the

whole school system has the germs of it, and they filter down. So what do you do? You shut up and you run your own show. I just turn to my kids and that's great, that's fantastic, but for me that's not the whole picture. You miss out on the stuff that could be done with cooperation with other people at any level whether they're administrators or teachers. (B, 1980)

Again, teachers in more affluent areas were able to carve out greater structural changes, while those working in poorer sections had only the label of professional as reward.

In the past we have had $100,000 worth of summer work allotted for program planning and this is essential to carry on a cohesive program throughout the year. You can't do long-range planning when you're teaching . . . For instance, long range -- if we're revising social studies in the elementary school, we'll have representation from each grade level. It might be that we are going to an electricity unit in science and that it really needs individual work projects for kids to do. Teacher time will be given to plan out what those projects will be and to get the materials and the instructions, etc., etc. So, it's for really in-depth planning. Sometimes, it's for resolving issues that seem to be blocking us in some way. We've had a number of workshops on what is the relationship between the races -- black and white kids, black and white teachers in the schools. What are the problems that come up? What are we doing to block solutions to these problems? What is the atmosphere? Quite intensive workshops. (BB, 1980)

A 29-year veteran of teaching equates the uncritical acceptance of changes in teaching to the pressure to appear as *professional* as the more affluent school systems, which readily yielded to the campaigns of textbook publishers. She speaks of her own community:

I think an awful lot of the fads came down to us through big businesses that wanted to sell books and kits and this and that and from people who, if you go right back to it, wanted to make money on their ideas, like the publishers. If they could convince a few towns, the so-called leaders like Newton and Brookline and Lincoln, that everything in the old books was out of date, everyone followed suit. You didn't want to be considered old-fashioned. (V, 1979)

A teacher from a wealthy suburb concurs:

Administrators who are in curriculum positions, well

some -- I'm generalizing -- are under pressure to produce and to show that curriculum and development is being done in the schools. They need something to run up the flagpole, to show the community that this is what we're doing. Some neat things might be happening next door with two teachers, but you can't sort of run this up -- this is what we're doing for the whole school or the whole town -- so it doesn't have as much value. So, they're under pressure to show the community that this is how we are handling curriculum development. The easiest way is to use commercial materials such as a beautiful SKIS kit, lovely, big expensive kits, and easier to do it like that. (00, 1979)

The training of teachers as professionals, a term originally applied to private entrepreneurs who worked on a fee per client basis, also encouraged prospective teachers to see each pupil as a separate client whose needs and *problems* were to be intensively and expertly analyzed using the newer, more specialized and up-to-date methods.

I've told my student teacher that some of the things that she has done, she would never be able to do if she were the only teacher in the classroom. She's only been able to do it because I've taken part of the class or because I've been there to help her. They require her to do work with an individual child and do individual assessment of that child. She is required to work with small groups. She is required to do a special unit with a whole class. She is required to do something in all these specific fields -- in art, in language arts, in math and science and so on. But she isn't required to do the meat and potatoes of classroom teaching. (Y, 1981)

The designation and training of teachers as professionals, a necessary lure for recruiting liberal arts graduates, thus served to confuse the label with the reality. Teachers were continually perplexed by the admonition to be *professional* while the area to which their expertise could be applied became narrower and narrower.

We're all professionals and our job is to educate children and it just seems to me that we ought not to exhaust any avenue that is available to us to get the quality education that the kids in our classroom deserve. I'll never understand whose idea it was, and maybe it wasn't anyone's idea, to set up a kind of adversary role between administrators and teachers, but it seems that every administrator has a vested interest in keeping his faculty at an arm's length. Even the best administrators like to remind their faculty from

time to time that they're the boss. And my attitude is that we're all in this together. So maybe you are the person in charge but do not let your in-chargeness stand in the way of your fairness so that the job that we're supposed to be doing can get done. That really bothers me. (W, 1981)

Salary increments were tied to professional development as incentives to teachers to go back to school and earn Masters degrees in remedial reading and new math. Teachers were persuaded to use their new expertise by serving on curriculum committees which would decide system-wide policies. Yet case after case confirms the frustration of those prepared for added responsibilities, but prevented from realizing them:

There were two people in my school, myself and a sixth grade teacher, who piloted social studies texts. We were not the only teachers who piloted the texts. I'm sure several teachers in other schools did too. The teachers who piloted the different programs never met together. Now they go and say, "We had this piloted and here is all the information and here is the text." But you wonder whether the text had already been chosen and this rigamarole had to be gone through. I just wonder how much of that goes on ahead of time. They have to cover themselves. You get kind of jaded. You think why bother. It was the same with the report card committee. You knew in the end it was going to be the way the people in charge really wanted it although I was on that committee and it lasted two years. They took an afternoon of your time once a week for two years. They pretty much shot down what we did and it got revamped right back to what it had been in the first place except for a little philosophy that was on the front of the card, and I noticed on the new batch of cards that we got that that isn't even there anymore. (R, 1981)

As teachers' own education increased, the disparity between their professional attainment and their inability to translate that new expertise into a strong position within the life of the school increased teacher alienation. There developed an inverse ratio between the level of education demanded to retain the job and the level of education needed to work well at the job. A teacher with a Master's in reading:

What I'm required to teach is predetermined. The equipment I use is predetermined, all the books are predetermined and we just get a certain series. Being able to order an extra workbook or two probably is as much extra anything that you can do or one of the decisions you make on your own or if your books fall apart

you can make a decision on your own that you can order those same books. (D, 1979)

The term *professional* was used to encourage teachers to participate in the running of the school, now larger and increasingly more difficult to manage. In fact, teachers were generally given only those tasks which reinforced the teachers' position but did not challenge it.

As Chair of the Faculty Senate, I'm having a lot of responsibility for writing, for getting the proposals prepared and everything. Partly, it's because the faculty senate is being specifically asked to participate in all of these meetings and stuff. Of course, you understand that the faculty senate has no authority whatsoever. I mean I can't initiate anything. I can't give out directives. We the faculty are advisory to the principal. Because she is pretty inefficient and pretty overwhelmed by everything and also isn't very enthusiastic about the job, so she's perfectly happy to let us handle a lot of these things because she feels as though, this is my own feeling, that she can't or she doesn't want to get into all that. (Y, 1981)

Minority teachers and parents found themselves caught between the desire to accept professional standards and the understanding that this perspective was often used to continue discriminatory treatment. A minority teacher speaks of her own ambivalence:

I think in terms of teachers we may have done ourselves once again a terrible disservice in that before 766 if there were children in your classroom that you had problems with, my God, you worked with them. You provided individualized instruction and you found the time to sit down and work with these kids who were not the middle-of-the-road average. And it was harder and it was frustrating, but you did make the time for it. Then came 766 and along came the opportunity for quote-unquote specialists working with these kids, and all of a sudden there was a proliferation of kids with special needs . . . Minority parents for a while thought that the system worked for their kids because of so many 766 referrals. On the one hand, they are somewhat resentful that their kid is being singled out, but then on the other hand, they said, "Well, at least someone has noticed my kid and he's getting this kind of help and that kind of special service." (W, 1981)

As the system becomes more oriented to the individual client model of traditional private sector professions, teachers are pressured to use set curricula originally created by fellow teachers to suit a par-

ticular classroom. Now seen as *professionally* produced, these curricula can be taken as expert advice for meeting another classroom's needs. Administrative attempts to collect their work and display the *best results* are rejected by teachers who otherwise willingly shared resources and ideas.

I think teachers resent that administrators who are supposed to be helping us come in and ask us to give them copies of things we've done in our room. They want to see all the stuff that we've done and share it with other teachers. I think generally teachers would want to share with other teachers and feel good about and do. I think next door or even in another school somebody is doing something, and they become very excited about it and that excitement is transmitted to another person, and I think they're very apt to try it. My own feeling when I get a pile of things that somebody else has made is that it's lovely and I may use some of it, but it's not mine. But their assumption is that now I'm going to become committed to it -- the whole curriculum -- that you will go and you will sit and you will listen and you'll learn and you'll go back to your classroom and you'll implement. (OO, 1980)

The sense of competition inherent in such appropriations literally robs the teacher of control of her labors. She may have created a game to help children learn, but it is now being used as a means of judging her among her fellow teachers. Others embrace such means, spurred by the knowledge that teacher evaluations often now include numbers of parental letters of praise and requests for class placement.

We got a teacher from an involuntary transfer a couple of years ago. She's been there six years now. She does marvelous things. I've never seen such big candy bars. She gives the kids tons of big candy bars. Everything they do, they get a prize and a party at least three times a week with a big cake and soda and everything. She puts ads in the papers to thank the parents for their children. On Valentine's Day she puts ads in the paper thanking the parents for letting her have their precious possessions. I showed it to the teacher who teaches beside me. She died and said, "How can you compete with that?" (CC, 1979)

Acceptance by the teacher of the term *professional* includes the understanding that the more specifically trained one is in a particular field, the more highly regarded one's opinion should be. What's obscured in all of this are the growing levels of control exerted by the school, using one term to describe all teachers when in fact it accords greater authority

to the *true* professionals, the specialists, while the greater responsibility for each child is still charged to the classroom teacher.

I hate to have them get up and walk out of the room. They can't leave without missing something, and it's something you have to make up or you have to sit down specifically with them. The part that really annoys me is that in the very end of it all whether they do well or they don't do well on the achievement tests -- and I know that they shouldn't put so much stock in achievement tests but I'm sure they do, they being the administrators and the parents too -- in the end you're responsible for that child for his reading and his English and math and all that and yet if they haven't been there in front of you, how the heck can you really be responsible for them? How can you be held responsible for it? That does bother me. (V, 1981)

When the classroom teacher has less control than specialists or administrators over the educational program of an individual child, while still being held responsible for the general well-being and instruction of the child, the teacher experiences demoralization, a sense of impotency, and resentment when progress is ascribed to specialists. The practical results are an unwillingness to follow the program dictated by the specialists and a resentment toward the individual child who represents a mark of the teacher's professional inadequacy. The issue of scheduling becomes the focus for the anger of classroom teachers toward specialists.

One of the things that has bothered me about these constant interruptions and the pace of teaching today is that a lot of that is taken away from you -- the creativeness, the feeling that I know what I'm doing, I'm going ahead and I'm going to do such and such, think of a new, fresh way to do it. There doesn't seem to be that kind of time anymore. This is not just a complaint of mine. I've heard it from other teachers. I know one teacher said the other day, "I want to teach science today and I don't care who comes and asks for my kids, they're not going to get them." I look back on the things that I used to do and I no longer have the time to do them anymore. The math program, for instance, took from 12:30 to 2:00 when they went to gym. They got back from gym at 2:30 and there goes the afternoon. I don't seem to paint anymore. I don't do music anymore. My science is hit or miss. I grabbed them when they came back from gym because we had the science teacher in to talk about vegetables. I grabbed them and I had bought garlic and onions and we jammed them in a pot. Literally. That's science. (L, 1980)

4

Post-Modern "Solutions"

Today when teachers turn to educational literature for advice and explanations for dealing with intransigent problems, they discover meticulously documented studies of their own inabilities to cope with such concerns. Time and again studies and evaluations confirm that the individual teacher is not perfect:

This year my principal's evaluation said, "Five kids looked up from their work and looked out of the window within a five-minute period. Now if you multiply five kids and five minutes in a period and you place it in an hour, this percentage are not doing their work and are not involved." (F, 1980)

As remedies, these studies urge the teacher to study herself, to ceaselessly examine her faults in order to better serve her pupils. They zero in on the teacher and demand that the teacher do the same if she and her pupils are to improve.

I usually have some behavior problems. Possibly I'm not structured enough, I don't know. My first principal used to say, "Isn't it funny? The difficult children always seem to be in your class." That's another thing -- instead of the principal supporting us in our problems, they turn it right back and they say it's our fault. So that we're a little bit afraid to go to them for help because they say, "Well, you're doing something wrong." (H, 1979)

The teacher discriminates, is consciously or unconsciously racist or sexist, more involved in the *here and now* than with global concerns. If she is indulgent to girls she retards their growth and accustoms them to unquestioningly respect authority; if she is demanding of boys she reinforces their importance and sense of rebelliousness.

If year after year she is unable to recreate the miraculous conversion of a depressed, poor AFDC child to a passionately curious, on-reading-level plugger, she is not fulfilling every child's potential, is by definition failing -- the child, the school, herself, and society's hopes for the future.

It's tempting to write that you had a bad class, or one could write that you had a very bad class and you handled it well. But he said, "Other people expect when you're looking for a job that you're a superteacher. They want to hire super teachers who never have any problems and that's not realistic. If anybody writes that she had a terrible class but she came through with flying colors, somebody could say, "If she's such a super teacher, her class shouldn't be terrible." (B, 1979)

The popular press increasingly reinforces these negative images of teachers. Two of the common stereotypes of veteran teachers described in the press and held by the public are: the lazy, superficial, tenured public servant, uninvolved in her work, getting away with as little as possible; and the embittered, rigidly inflexible battle-ax whose class resembles army boot camp in atmosphere.

I have some very mixed feelings about the role of order in classrooms. There's a teacher at this school who I look at with a mixture of awe and contempt. She has absolute iron control over her class -- control that is so good and so consistent that she very rarely raises her voice, she very rarely keeps anyone after school, but you don't move from your seat until you raise your hand and get permission. On the other hand, I have her with 32 kids on one side of me, and on the other side there's another teacher with 32 kids. This other teacher is screaming. The kids are screaming. And I started thinking, "Is it better to be a kid in this class where the teacher is always at the end of her rope -- yelling, screaming, or is it better to be this other teacher's kids -- not allowed to get out of their chairs, but doing marvelous art projects, doing a lot of positive stuff?" She can do it because she has absolutely total control, and everybody does the same thing at the same time. (A, 1980)

Juxtaposed to these negative images is the ideal of the nurturant, understanding patient teacher to whom every child is entitled.

I think you have to be pretty kind to them yourself. I'm a head-patter. I stroke and pat. Somebody fell down and I'd say, "Are you all right, honey?" You have to be kind, firm, and fair. You give a child what he needs when he needs it. (E, 1979)

If every teacher would only be perfect -- responding fairly, efficiently, and effectively with infinite wisdom and tact to every child and exigency, we would have the perfect system. Teachers know that they

are incapable of such persistent perfection. They often react in ways that increase their sense of isolation and reinforce their powerlessness in the institution. When confronted with stereotyped choices that deny or obscure the conflicting demands placed on teachers, teachers frequently lash out in angry denial while internalizing the negative message. They are told, and have come to believe, they have *burned out.*

I had found that toward the middle of last year I was beginning to feel -- dead. And I was beginning to feel frustrated and I was beginning to feel sort of like this was a drudgery. And I had never felt like that before -- I mean, classroom teaching was my thing. I really loved it. Then this year coming into the situation and getting such a difficult class, I started off the year with a tremendous sense of frustration. I thought, "My God, what am I going to do with these kids?" I kept thinking, "I'm not really, really happy with what's happening in this class and I wonder how much of it is my own fault." (W, 1981)

5

Burnout and Deadwood

What has been labeled *burnout* is, in fact, anger and frustration not easily expressed in schools. The concept of *burnout* is the natural result of the ideology of professionalism which encourages teachers to see themselves as more powerful than they actually are and, therefore, more responsible alone to correct complex societal and institutional dilemmas. The coining of the term *burnout* at the same time that teachers are threatened with the loss of their jobs serves to direct the focus of each teacher's growing anger away from a critical analysis of schools as institutions to a preoccupation with her own failure. Curiously, the preoccupation in describing teachers as burned out or deadwood has become a way of using these terms of deviance to represent the *true identity* of all teachers by which every dedicated teacher will eventually be defined. It encompasses even those who haven't burned out because if burnout is the natural end to a dedicated teacher, those who have managed to survive are seen as callous, self-serving.

The two labels of *burnout* and *deadwood* further divide the teaching workforce. Younger teachers or those still with other career options are told they have worked too hard and have, therefore, *burned out*. Older teachers are told they aren't working hard enough and have become *deadwood*. The fact that both are demoralized points to similar concerns, but the labels obscure the commonalities.

Those people who are visibly upset, who are willing to go to battle for a child, still believe in the possibility of change within their work situation and in the value of education as a tool for achieving equal opportunity. They continue to believe in the system's ability to respond to logical, reasonable, and justified criticism.

They treat you at central office as though you don't know anything. You go down and you say, "I'd like to discuss the 766 process because I don't understand it quite and I don't think the kids are getting serviced." People give you all this runaround, rigamarole, and it becomes so complicated that you want to say, "Okay, you do it." But I'm not listening to that any more. I've struggled through a lot my first four years and

hell, now I'm a damn good teacher and I know what my kids need. What happens is that then they become kind of frightened of you, as the individual who is going after them and saying, "Wait a minute, you're responsible for this." It makes me angry because it's taking so much time, and I shouldn't have to do the pushing. (G, 1980)

As long as influential segments of the community actively support efforts to improve the public school, the teacher feels some degree of comfort with her position of change-maker. If these groups no longer see teaching as politically correct, if they can no longer pressure the federal government or the school system for funds, or if they now see the role of the teacher as a glamorless role for women, the teacher is left extremely vulnerable. When and if these support groups withdraw, the teacher's attempts at change become more difficult, begin to appear useless, if not destructive to her own job security.

They [the school administration] go out of their way to sabotage their own affirmative action program . . . If they intend in good faith to make this thing work, then they have to find ways to do it so it's not going to make people feel, like the Bakkes. You don't want that kind of feeling, and it exists . . . People began to look to see who is disappearing and who's staying and I heard comments passed like, "Well, you don't have anything to worry about. You can go any place you want." Actually, I was thinking I probably do have something to worry about, plenty. Because if they do intend to let people go to make room for minorities, that means that all minority teachers in the system are going to have a pretty hard way, too, 'cause it's going to create a lot of feelings, hard feelings, and a lot of rancor that doesn't necessarily have to be there if it's done in a fair and equitable way. (W, 1981)

The teacher cannot help noticing the areas she is not able to change, the emotions in her and her pupils she has difficulty controlling.

I've been thinking a lot about my own survival, how I can get through the year in a way that helps me keep my sanity and helps the kids learn and I think my priorities deal with (1) my own sanity, because without it there's nothing else; (2) the kids' learning; (3) the kids' heads and social change comes after all those things and I don't know when I'm going to get there. I would definitely like to leave my mark, but given my personality structure, it's hard. (A, 1980)

The disturbing fact is that admitting her mis-

takes does not prevent her from continuing to make them. The school provides no constructive place for teachers' legitimate anger to be channeled. The anger turns inward or is directed at her fellow teachers who represent what she is fearful of becoming and feels helpless to prevent.

I guess what I'm saying is that sometimes I just feel aggravated by picky little things. I just feel like I'm a nag, not directly to the people maybe but just thinking, "That bugs me and that bugged me and that bugged me," which is not a healthy kind of way. The avenues for communication are just so nonexistent or so skewed, it's really hard to get above that. (J, 1981)

I think I tend to get angrier inside than I otherwise would because you really can't talk about things. They throw them right back at you. "Well, that's the way it's always been . . ." In this place there is no outlet for anger and it's really been hard to know what to do with it. The whole business of having to psych things out, do I go to the office? Why can't this be straight? That doesn't bring out the best in me. I don't like the feelings I have when I'm acting that way. (B, 1980)

The teacher can either accept the label of burnout and leave, or she can retreat even further emotionally and physically. Experts on burnout and teacher effectiveness, by zeroing in on the individual teacher and her classroom to explain education's increasingly documented failures, have chosen to scrutinize the most vulnerable member of the school system's hierarchy -- the classroom teacher, 87 percent of whom are women on the elementary school level. Those teachers are the people least critical of the investigators' findings because they confirm the teacher's own lack of self-esteem. Documentation of teacher's failures without linking individual problems to institutional roadblocks does not spur the teacher to rededicate herself to the profession. She has now become convinced of her own worthlessness and is sure she will simply continue to fail.

The funny thing is that I'm a good teacher and a good teacher can teach in almost intolerable situations . . . I see so many not bad teachers, just people who should not be teaching and it's important to me that if I thought I wasn't doing a good job at it, I wasn't helping the kids, I would get out of it right away. It's beginning to feel that way. I guess the term is burned out. The ideas, the spontaneity wasn't coming. I wasn't feeling fresh or excited when I was coming into the classroom. (W, 1981)

I assimilated into my surroundings. I'm a reasonably good mimic and I also needed models of success since I was getting poor feedback and I was isolated my first year, and I needed to suceed very badly. So that's what I did -- I studied models of success and they were authoritarian, and I learned . . . I recognized that I was somebody that I didn't want to be, and that -- it just brought home to me a personal dissatisfaction that I hadn't stuck to my ideas, that I had given them up. (C, 1979)

Once the teacher is convinced that she has burned out she has admitted that she has used up her inner resources, that she is personally deficient, and that she must leave the occupation for her own good and that of her pupils.

Parents, many of whom have experienced bitter frustration and conflicts with individual teachers, accept the definitions of burnout and deadwood as labels easily affixed to troublesome teachers, much as teachers label parents as deficient or school phobic to explain a child's lack of progress or unruly behavior. Neither side is encouraged to look at the parallels between their situations and the institutional barriers that create and sustain these conflicts.

I always used to say, "As a teacher I hate parents and as a parent I hate teachers." I didn't want to go up to school if my kids were having problems. I think some teachers make you feel like an intruder and they probably are threatened by parents being around. At the end of the day you get very businesslike and either the youngster reads or he doesn't, and when you say it to a parent that way, it doesn't always come across too well, you know. (D, 1980)

Today this mother came in. In the course of talking with her, I said, "You know, I'm the teacher who called you the first day your son was here" because I wanted to find out if he was in Title 1 reading or any of these special programs. She said, "Oh, yes. I remember." After school the principal comes up to me and says, "You know, I need to know whenever you make a telephone call to a parent." I just looked at him and took a deep breath. I said, "Any phone call?" And he said, "Yes, just in case something comes up, so I'll know what's coming out of this school." I swallowed what he said and I walked away. I wanted to tell somebody but I realized that all those people had probably been living under the same thing forever. I mean, this is their idea of the role of the principal, which is to control. (A, 1980)

The teacher begins to devalue and doubt the ex-

istence of those qualities in herself which were her reasons for entering teaching. She is not sure they ever existed in her co-workers.

He said, "Look around this room. Those over there and those over there are typical . . . public school teachers." He was stereotyping these people in their thirties and forties; not thirties new but thirties old style. They tended to be overdressed, overweight lumps . . . They all looked rather vacant. . . . I looked around and I saw some of these people and heard some of the questions they were asking. I wouldn't have anything to talk with those people about and I know that's important to me, that kind of sharing. (B, 1979)

The teacher's own past accomplishments appear inconsequential.

I walked into a supermarket the other day and the boy who was checking out my groceries said, "Hello, Mrs. _____!" with such love. They recognize me. And he's 18 years old, and they remember me. A lot of the kids that I meet years later have wonderful memories . . . So I wonder, is it just -- I feel that I give them a good start. I give them a belief in themselves . . . I make them think they can do it rather than my doing it for them. And I try to build up their self-image. I think I do it all right, and then all of a sudden, these people come in and say, "You're no good." So it's hard, you know, it's hard. So now I'm thinking already, you know, I could retire in about two-and-a-half years, maybe I'll retire. I used to think I wouldn't want to retire so soon and I enjoyed my job . . . This fall I thought to myself, "Maybe I'm really not such a good teacher, you know. Maybe I'm really not that good. Maybe I should never have gone into teaching." (H, 1980)

What continually strikes us as significant in the use of the term *burnout* to describe teacher discontent is the implicit assumption that teachers are responsible for their own departures, and that it is an act of benevolence on the part of school systems to let them go at the very time that Reduction in Force allows these teachers no choice in their departure from teaching. For those teachers who are being laid off, *burnout* encourages a teacher to feel grateful for losing her paycheck rather than directing her anger in a fight for an equitable system of RIF for all teachers and a healthier and more productive work environment for those who remain.

By concentrating criticism for classroom failures on individual performance, *all* teachers, including

superteachers, become timorous. They too refrain from taking risks.

My school is closing. There's a lot of tension over that. Plus the fact that they're getting rid of teachers now. Everything becomes magnified, everything is much more frightening, anything the child does is much more frightening, because somebody could come into your classroom at any moment and see that and that would be the reason -- that would be seen as your evaluation. It distorts your relationship with children, with your peers. (G, 1981)

The self-hate and self-doubt that follow are the roots of an anxiety that is projected out as hating the people you are afraid of becoming. The teacher who had been handpicked by one group of parents senses the pressure on all teachers and decides to leave.

I started looking at the other teachers I was teaching with and seeing myself retrenching, not taking the risks, the educational risks that I used to teach. I used to do all kinds of interesting things with my students, go places with them, get involved with all kinds of projects, build things all over the classroom. But every once in a while someone would notice that the classroom wasn't as neat as it should be or if that wasn't a factor with one principal then something else would be and since everything is cumulative and anything can be pointed to get rid of you now, you start to retrench and you start to become conservative. You feel a lack of growth and you look around. Everyone has a stereotype of those 30-year veterans and I found myself becoming exactly the same way and it really frightened me. (G, 1981)

The current debate over seniority versus merit in deciding layoffs rests on this assumption -- that schools as institutions cannot and will not revitalize a teacher of several years' service. It is all too easily accepted by policy makers, as well as teachers, that the institutions will deaden those who work in them if they do not receive new infusions of energy -- *new blood* -- from some outside source. Further the debate over seniority versus merit is never discussed within the context of teaching as an occupation requiring less and less critical thinking, originality, and creativity. As more and more administrative decisions are made for the teacher by the school or the school system, the teacher's role is returned to that of dispenser of various prepackaged curriculum systems. *Merit* in such situations can only mean adherence to pre-established dicta.

A friend of mine went to teach in Baltimore. She had taught with me for five years. She's a wonderful teacher, super teacher, very conscientious and very organized. She lasted three months there. It was a disaster. For one thing, the curriculum was deadly. "Here is a book and teach it. You should be on page 200 by such and such a date." It has nothing to do with your kids and nothing to do with whatever ideas you might want to bring in. Just do it and be on page 200 by such and such a date! That was their approach. Deadly. Secondly, she had a classroom with nine kids with hyperactivity. Very disruptive. No support from the principal, a sort of wishy-washy, incompetent man. She said it was a travesty of learning. Here she had probably 18 kids who to one degree or another were interested in learning, some very interested, and 9 kids turned that class into total chaos. And she is no pushover as far as discipline goes. She is a very competent teacher. Well, she was getting an ulcer. She came to school nauseated every day and was throwing up before she left the house because it was such an uncontrolled situation. There was no one to turn to, no one. To her amazement, she ended up writing a letter of resignation, and she left after Thanksgiving. She felt really sick about it, but knew that her mental health would not take it. It was really sad because she was a super teacher. (BB, 1979)

No group of parents, visiting classrooms for the purposes of selection, would now recognize her competency. After November, they would not even have the luxury of scrutinizing her capabilities.

6

Individualism Reconsidered

The books and magazine articles of today, unlike those in the sixties, concentrate on shoring up the coping skills of isolated teachers. These writings consist of short articles addressed to the teacher as an individual citing specific ideas he or she can use to cope with the problems of teaching. Issues are discussed in terms of the individuals involved. Conflict is described in terms of the conflict between teacher and the parent, colleague, custodian, or secretary. The school environment is thus fragmented and the solutions suggested are often contradictory. The suggestions for improvement do not take into account how change in one sphere may affect relationships in another sphere. Teachers are never urged to look beyond the classroom, to search for similarities and differences between themselves and others, either within the structure of schools or in other institutions of society. Teachers who one by one enter the profession remain largely unaware of the institutional nature of school systems and are, therefore, ill-prepared to handle the conflicts that arise from the nature of that institutional structure. The teacher's position within the school system as a whole is not seen as a *professional* concern and the institutional conflicts inherent in the role of teacher remain unchallenged.

We have shown that the image of the *all-powerful schoolmarm* is a myth. It is created by a system which has isolated individual teachers, granting each teacher autonomy to make and carry out the difficult decisions herself, while the real agenda is determined outside the classroom.

You have a great deal of autonomy about what goes on in your classroom within those four walls, but at the same time you have to be sure that it looks a certain way, that it appears to be the way that it's supposed to be on the outside. In other words, you can't do anything that is too apparently outre *without bumping up against things. So the fact that we* control *25 or so little people is a very small compensation for not feeling as though we can control the kinds of books we can order, have the kinds of programs we want, the kind of feeling of friendliness throughout the school. Each classroom seems to be the kids' turf and there's a lot of com-*

petitiveness and aggressiveness about that. All those things that a teacher feels bad about and with no control over. (Y, 1981)

Therefore, we are not arguing that each teacher would wish or would benefit from a reassertion of her role as the individual arbiter of children's lives within an isolated classroom. However, without understanding how the structure of the school creates these tensions, a teacher may acquiesce to the demands to work ever harder while growing increasingly frustrated with her own efforts and those of her fellow teachers. She may become competitive with other teachers in lobbying her principal for favored pupils, preference in assignments, or more supplies. She may voluntarily seek autonomy and shut her door in the hopes that a rise in reading scores will be directly attributable to her abilities.

All of these individual attempts to ameliorate teachers' sense of frustration may well contribute to its increase. Solutions encouraging individual negotiation for control of greatly circumscribed, if not clearly articulated boundaries, neglect the area teachers consistently noted as helpful to their particular teaching situation. Many teachers reported that their most reliable source for new techniques and strategies, as well as feedback for confirmation of their own solutions, are the discussions they hold with other teachers during breaktime, between speakers at an in-service workshop, at crosstown meetings with teachers of the same grade level, or by a frank request for help in the teachers' room.

Our interviews revealed that these *hands on* discussions, while alleviating specific problem areas, were not the only type of discussions necessary to break the isolation and accompanying loss of self-esteem reported by many of them. It was in their attempt to extend the discussion into the areas outside the classroom walls that teachers experienced the greatest resistance -- whether this referred to community meetings with parents, whole school discussions of school climate, or attempts to link one teacher's issues with another. Pressure from outside support groups, and federal and state programs mandating teacher involvement, afforded the few possibilities for leverage teachers experienced in confronting system-wide reform:

The school district was newly federally redeveloped so there have been a lot of changes . . . The point is that we really didn't know how to solve these problems. Teacher Corps became a vehicle to help us solve these problems by showing us unity as parents and teachers. The parent coordinator worked very hard to get good

relationships between the parents and the teacher and we got to know each other as people and friends and not just in that relationship where it is so stand-offish. "Don't you attack my child or I'm going to attack you" bit . . . We went from talking to taking action. Parents and teachers began working with each other, learning how to go about problem solving, gathering the correct statistics and presenting them in a correct manner, not just going up to City Hall and yelling and screaming. (D, 1980)

These opportunities were not frequent and they were not encouraged. Involvement in community-wide efforts and programs to increase staff morale were necessary to engage both staff and parents in federal programs. Once these programs withdrew or became part of the general administrative structure, the roles of teacher and parent were relegated to carrying out the decisions mandated by the school hierarchy.

At the early release days when we had Teacher Corps we got to stay in our own building and work out issues. We had much more communication. We could stay in our building and talk over programs. You'd know an issue was coming up and it would be decided. Now that Teacher Corps is gone, all our early release days are taken up with superintendent's meetings. (D, 1980)

Communication among teachers and parents was modified from establishing a consensus of concerns in community-wide meetings to defining school-wide tensions as problems of specific individuals to be handled in isolation. The mass movements of the sixties that had propelled many teachers and parents to take a more activist stance in education were consistently translated by administrative design to programs in which individuals were pitted against each other -- parent vs. parent, teacher vs. teacher, parent vs. teacher -- for the right to participate in and control the few reforms allowed.

Our schools will not be served by counselling teachers to minimize or block out their frustrations. Nor will our schools be improved by a mass exodus of teachers, whether they leave as a result of reduction in force, a purging of the *deadwood*, or their own personal considerations, and their replacement by a new batch of teachers who will inevitably face the same problems when they too have *burned out* or become desensitized:

What's so easy to fall into is to say, "Oh, the primary team has been frustrating because of that personality or that style or whatever when I also at the same time have to sort of believe that there are certain things

that at least could be tried to draw some of it out, to draw those people out. I really feel in a lot of ways the staff is flat and yet I feel like there are dynamic natures sleeping there, just waiting to be tapped. (J, 1979)

Teachers sense that being a good *professional* -- facing the issues alone -- frequently ends in bitter self-recrimination or alienation from teachers, parents, and students. The crisis of declining enrollments and of reductions in force can be seen as a demoralizing period for teachers but also as an invigorating one, for it uncovers a latent anger and its resultant energy. It makes obvious the contradictions present for teachers that have been smoothed over in preceding eras of increased enrollments and flowing federal funds:

Teachers must now begin to turn the investigation of schools away from scapegoating individual teachers, students, parents, and administrators toward a system-wide approach. Teachers must recognize how the structure of schools controls their work and deeply affects their relationships with their fellow teachers, their students, and their students' families. Teachers must feel free to express these insights and publicly voice their concerns. Only with this knowledge can they grow into wisdom and help others to grow.

I think there is a responsibility for every teacher to be involved as greatly as they can in matters other than what's in the classroom. Very often when you are in the classroom with kids you do get sort of jaded and isolated from the mainstream of the world but if you at the same time are simultaneously working outside the classroom, still dealing with education but maybe talking about in a different light or working from the standpoint of teacher advocacy, you continue to grow and you don't get so stultified like you would if you just close your classroom door every day and spent 25 years in the classroom. (W, 1981)

Probably for the first time in my school we have not talked specifically about the kids and subject matter and school problems. We've been talking about political things and how it affects our personal life, too. I think it's taught me a lesson that you cannot hide your head in the sand. I'm not just fighting for my job, but I'm fighting for the kids, too. I think it's going to help my awareness of things and help me maybe stick through it a little bit. That I'm not alone in this and I've got other people to talk with and see how it is going to affect other people. I think it has already made me mentally, and also just in action, make more of a commitment to my work. (Z, 1981)

*The Boston Women's Teachers' Group has produced a 30-minute slide-tape show based on interview material from its study. They have also developed a workshop series designed to create teacher support groups. More information is available from the Boston Women's Teachers' Group, Inc., P.O. Box 169, W. Somerville, MA 02144.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF EACH RESPONDENT INTERVIEWED ON A BI-WEEKLY BASIS

Age	Race	Type of College Attended	Number of Years Teaching	Grade Level	Teaching Experience	Socioeconomic Level of Current School	Marital Status	Number of Children	Native of Area Now Teaching
A--32	White	L.A.[1]	5	Primary[2]	Urban*	Title I	Married	1	No
B--40	White	L.A.	4	Primary	Suburban		Married	3	Yes
C--29	White	L.A.	5	Primary	Urban*	Title I	Single	0	No
D--45	White	S.T.C.[3]	20	Primary	Urban*	Title I	Married	2	Yes
E--49	White	S.T.C.	27	Primary	Suburban	Title I	Single	0	Yes
F--52	White	L.A.	30	Inter.	Suburban		Married	0	No
L--55	White	L.A.	30	Primary	Suburban*		Single	0	Yes
M--35	Black	L.A.	11	Inter.[4]	Urban	Title I	Married	2	No
R--45	White	S.T.C.	10	Inter.	Suburban*	Title I	Married	0	Yes
S--35	White	S.T.C.	10	Inter.	Urban	Title I	Single	0	Yes
V--53	White	S.T.C.	29	Inter.	Suburban*		Single	0	Yes
W--34	Black	L.A.	11	Inter.	Urban*	Title I	Divorced	0	No
X--60	White	L.A.	15	Inter.	Suburban*		Married	2	Yes
Y--50	White	L.A.	15	Primary	Urban*	Title I	Married	3	Yes
Z--32	White	L.A.	11	Primary	Urban*	Title I	Married	1	Yes

[1]L.A. - Liberal Arts College [2]Primary - Grades K-3 [3]S.T.C. - State Teachers' College

[4]Inter. - Intermediate grades 4-6

*Indicates that the teacher has spent the great majority of her teaching career in one school system.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF EACH RESPONDENT INTERVIEWED ON A BI-MONTHLY BASIS

Age	Race	Type of College Attended	Number of Years Teaching	Grade Level	Teaching Experience	Socioeconomic Level of Current School	Marital Status	Number of Children	Native of Area Now Teaching
AA--28	White	S.T.C.[1]	7	Inter.[2]	Suburban*		Single	0	Yes
BB--45	White	L.A.[3]	20	Inter.	Suburban*		Married	0	No
CC--38	White	S.T.C.	17	Primary[4]	Suburban*		Single	0	Yes
NN--39	Black	L.A.	16	Primary	Urban*	Title I	Divorced	2	No
OO--44	White	L.A.	23	Primary	Suburban*		Married	2	Yes
PP--53	White	S.T.C.	30	Primary	Semi-urban*	Title I	Single	0	Yes
QQ--45	Black	S.T.C.	17	Primary	Urban*	Title I	Married	2	Yes
TT--48	Black	S.T.C.	9	Inter.	Urban*	Title I	Married	3	No
PL--60	White	L.A.	28	Primary	Suburban*		Divorced	1	Yes
KK--33	White	L.A.	7	Primary	Urban		Married	0	No

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF EACH RESPONDENT INTERVIEWED ONCE

G--33	White	L.A.	10	Inter.	Suburban	Title I	Single	0	No
H--58	White	L.A.	17	Primary	Suburban	Title I	Married	3	No
J--30	White	L.A.	4	Primary	Urban		Single	0	No
HH--38	White	L.A.	4	Primary	Urban		Single	0	Yes
DD--35	White	S.T.C.	4	Inter.	Suburban		Single	0	Yes

[1]S.T.C. - State Teachers' College [2]Inter. - Intermediate grades 4-6 [3]L.A. - Liberal Arts College

[4]Primary - Grades K-3

*Indicates that the teacher has spent the great majority of her teaching career in one school system.

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